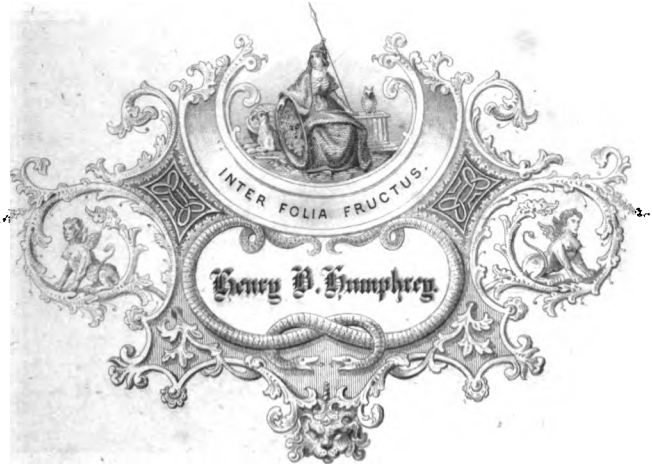
ON THE
STATE OF MAN SUBSEQUENT
TO THE PROMULGATION
OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART II.



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Geo. Abbot

May, 1871.

Small Books on Great Subjects.

EDITED BY A FEW WELL WISHERS

TO KNOWLEDGE.

N°. XX.

ON THE STATE OF MAN SUBSEQUENT TO THE PROMULGATION OF CHRISTIANITY

PART II.

LONDON
WILLIAM PICKERING
1852

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

A. D.	
337	CONSTANTINUS II., CONSTANTIUS, and CONSTANS joint emperors.
338	Athanasius is recalled from exile at the desire of Constantinus II. and reinstated in his bishopric.
340	Civil war, and death of Constantinus II., who was slain in a skirmish while making an attack on the dominions of Constans.
341	A synod of bishops met at Antioch and deposed Athanasius under the pretext that having been deprived of his bishopric by a synod, he could not resume its functions but by the decree of another synod. In a synod of 50 Italian bishops he was afterwards absolved. He introduced monastic life into the West.
342	Death of Tiridates and consequent sufferings of the Christians in Armenia.
347	Council of Sardica, 370 bishops. They absolve Athanasius.
349	Athanasius is restored a second time to the bishopric of Alexandria, at the instance of Constans.
350	Murder of Constans, and assumption of the purple by Magnentius and Vetranio.
351	Constantius makes war against Magnentius and defeats him. Declares his cousin Gallus Cæsar.

A. D.	
353	Magnentius kills himself at Lyons. Council of Arles.
354	Disgrace and death of Gallus.
355	Julianus declared Cæsar. Council of Milan, in which a sentence of deposition was pronounced against Athanasius, the Emperor Constantius having banished all who refused to join in this act, among the rest Hilarius Bishop of Poictiers. Athanasius escapes from an armed force sent by Constantius to put him to death.
357	Hosius Bishop of Cordova, then 100 years old, and Liberius Bishop of Rome yield to the wishes of the emperor and are recalled.
359	Council of Ariminum or Rimini. The emperor ordered the bishops to be detained till they had subscribed a new confession of faith. Those who refused were expelled from their churches.
360	The legions of Gaul being ordered to march into the East, they refuse, and proclaim JULIANUS emperor.
	Ulphilas bishop of the Goths flourished.
361	Constantius dies. Julianus succeeds him peaceably. He restores polytheism as the religion of the empire.
363	Julianus is slain in a battle with the Persians, 26th June, aged 32. JOVIANUS is chosen emperor.
364	After making some laws in favour of the Christians, Jovianus dies, aged 33.
	VALENTINIANUS is chosen emperor, and associates his brother VALENS with himself.
365	The Alemanni invade Gaul.
367	Valens receives baptism from the hands of a Areian bishop, and becomes a convert to that doctrine.
368	Valentinianus passes and fortifies the Rhine.

A. D.	
370	Martin of Tours establishes Monasteries in Gaul.
373	A severe inquisition is made respecting the crime of magic. Many are convicted and suffer. Death of Athanasius. Theodosius, the father of Theodosius the Great, recovers Africa.
375	Death of Valentinianus. He is succeeded by his sons GRATIANUS and VALENTINIANUS II.
376	Theodosius, the restorer of Africa and of Britain is executed on a false charge.
	The Goths, invaded by the Huns, implore the protection of Valens.
378	Defeat of the Romans by the Goths, near Hadrianople. Valens is slain.
	Massacre of the Gothic youth in Asia.
379	Gratianus invests THEODOSIUS with the purple, and assigns him the empire of the East.
380	Theodosius is baptized.
381	Death and splendid funeral of Athanaric the Gothic king. Council of Constantinople, called to establish the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and Son.
383	Settlement of the Goths in Thrace and Asia.
385	MAXIMUS having assumed the purple, Gratianus is murdered by his general Androgathius.
	Priscillian and his associates are executed.
386	Ambrose successfully opposes the Empress Justina in her claim of a church for the Arcians in Milan.
387	Maximus invades Italy. Sedition at Antioch.
388	Defeat and death of Maximus. Theodosius visits Rome, and puts the question in the senate whether Christ or Jupiter shall in future receive their homage. They decide for Christianity.

A. D.	
389	Destruction of the Temple of Serapis.
390	Sedition and massacre at Thessalonica. Theodosius submits to do penance.
392	Death of Valentinianus the Younger. Usurpation of Eugenius.
395	Death of Theodosius. The empire is finally divided into East and West, under his sons ARCADIUS and HONORIUS.
	Revolt of the Goths.
396	Alaric marches into Greece; is attacked by Stilicho, regent of the West. He escapes into Epirus. Treats with the Court of Constantinople, and is appointed Governor of Illyricum.
397	Ambrose of Milan and Martin of Tours die.
398	Election of Chrysostom to the bishopric of Constantinople.
	Alaric is proclaimed king of the Visigoths.
400	Pelagius teaches his doctrine, denying original sin.
400-403	Alaric invades Italy: is defeated by Stilicho in the battle of Pollentia.
404	Chrysostom is exiled.
406	Radagaisus invades Italy: is defeated by Stilicho.
408	Stilicho is put to death by order of Honorius. Death of Arcadius. He is succeeded by his son Theodosius, then a child.
	Rome is besieged by the Goths.
409	Alaric accepts a ransom for the city. Invasion of Spain by the Suevi, Vandals, &c.
409-410	Renewed siege and final capture of Rome by the Goths. Death of Alaric.
412	Cyril patriarch of Alexandria.
414	Ataulphus or Adolphus, king of the Goths and brother of Alaric, marries Placidia the daughter of Theodosius Magnus, who had been captured in Rome.

A. D.	
420	The Franks established in Gaul. Jerome dies, aged 88.
423	Nestorius patriarch of Constantinople.
428	Count Boniface invites the Vandals into Africa.
429	Genseric king of the Vandals lands in Africa.
430	Siege of Hippo. Death of St. Augustine.
431	First Council of Ephesus. St. Patrick preaches in Ireland. He was born A. D. 372 at Bonaven (since called Kilpatrick) in Scotland. He was carried off by pirates at the age of 17, and for six years kept the flocks of a prince of the Scots in Ireland. He then made his escape, but returned after a time to convert the Irish.
433	Attila succeeds his uncle Rugilas as king of the Huns. Exile of Nestorius.
439	The Vandals take Carthage.
446	Treaty of peace between Attila and the Eastern Empire.
449	Descent of the Saxons upon Britain. Second Council of Ephesus.
450	Theodosius II. dies. He is succeeded by MARCIANUS.
451	Council of Chalcēdon. The great battle of Chalons, in which Attila is defeated by Ætius and Theodoric king of the Visigoths.
452	Invasion of Italy by Attila.
453	Attila dies.
454	Valentinianus murders Ætius. Violates the wife of Maximus, and is put to death by conspirators excited by the husband, who assumes the purple, and forcibly marries the Empress Eudoxia, his wife having died. The empress in revenge invites Genseric to her aid. Maximus is murdered by the people. Genseric enters Rome without opposition, plunders it, and carries off his booty to Africa.

A. D.	
457	MARJORIANUS Emperor of the West.
472	Olybrius is invited to assume the purple by Ricimer: and Rome is again sacked by the barbarian army by which he was supported.
476	Odoacer chief of the mercenaries, removes Romulus Augustus, otherwise called Augustulus, from the throne, and assumes the title of King of Italy.
481	Clovis king of the Franks. ANASTASIUS Emperor of the East.
489	Theodoric the Goth undertakes the conquest of Italy.
493	Odoacer capitulates, but is put to death. Theodoric reigns as king of Italy.
496	Conversion of Clovis.
500	Theodoric visits Rome. The Saracens ravage Syria and Phœnicia.
502	Cavades king of Persia takes Amida, through the neglect or treachery of the monks.
508	Conquest of Aquitain by the Franks.
510	Consulship of Clovis.
518	JUSTIN I. Emperor of the East.
527	JUSTINIANUS Emperor of the East: reforms the Roman law.
528-529	Code of Justinian.
530-533	Pandects or Digest.
533	The Institutes. Belisarius invades Africa.
534	Belisarius takes Gelimer the king of the Vandals, and subverts the Vandal kingdom in Africa.
535	Belisarius invades and subdues Italy.
536	Final establishment of the French monarchy in Gaul.
546	Rome retaken by the Goths under Totila; but
547	Retaken by Belisarius.
548	Recall of Belisarius.
549	Rome again taken possession of by Totila.

A. D.

552 Totila is killed in battle with Narses, who succeeded Belisarius in his command.

553 Teias the last general of the Goths, is killed, and nearly the whole nation destroyed, after two days' fighting. Second Council of Constantinople.

558 First embassy of the Avars to Constantinople, after they had been driven out by the Turks.

559 The Bulgarians invade the empire and approach Constantinople: they are defeated by Belisarius.

563 Belisarius is falsely accused and disgraced; but after six months' imprisonment in his own house, is restored to his honours.

565 March 19th, Belisarius dies. Nov. 14, Justinianus dies, and is succeeded by JUSTIN II.

566 Second embassy of the Avars. Turks and Sogdoites also send envoys to Constantinople. The Avars scorned by the Eastern emperor join in alliance with Alboin king of the Lombards, who, by their assistance, destroys the kingdom of the Gepidæ.

567 Alboin undertakes the conquest of Italy.

572 Chosroes or Nushirvan again makes war on the empire: takes Dara and Apamea.

574 Tiberius associated in the empire. He makes a truce of three years with Chosroes.

578 TIBERIUS II. Emperor of the East.

579 Death of Chosroes, after having been defeated by the Imperial forces. Hormouz or Hormisdas succeeds.

582 MAURITIUS Emperor of the East. St. Columbanus or Columban arrives in France with twelve companions, and establishes himself in the Vosges mountains. He was brought up in the convent of Bangor.

590 Pontificate of Gregorius I. surnamed the Great. Hormouz having reigned tyrannically is dethroned by the Persians. His

A. D.	
	eldest son Chosroes seeks the alliance of Rome, and is placed on the throne
591	by Narses (not the conqueror of Italy) the imperial general.
596	Augustine is sent to England by Gregorius I. to attempt the conversion of the Anglo Saxons.
602	Mauritius is dethroned and murdered by the mutinous soldiery, and PHOCAS a centurion, is invested with the purple: a man of infamous character.

ON THE STATE OF MAN SUBSEQUENT TO THE PROMULGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART II.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is one melancholy question which intrudes itself equally on the historian and the biographer:—has any one ever grappled with, has any one ever answered it?—Yet who that thinks, can avoid asking himself, when he views the course of human affairs either collectively or individually,—why it is that man, knowing the better part, and in his heart despising the worse, wilfully shuts the eyes of his natural intelligence, lest he should see what is wise; and creates his own evils by adopting a course, which, to a calm observer, appears little better than insane? Watch the career of the child; he is not taught how to govern himself, but is left to the sport of circum-

stances; yet the parent knows that on the training of that young mind probably depends the whole comfort of his own old age. Watch equally the career of a nation: rulers and legislators know that unless they can appeal to the moral feelings of the people, all government is at an end, and brute force must finally prevail: yet the moral training of the population is the last object which occupies their attention! Why is this?

This question presses itself with unusual force upon the mind whilst contemplating the progress of Christianity from its first promulgation. The precepts of that religion were calculated to render penal laws almost unnecessary, and to create a population more orderly, and at the same time happier, and more prosperous, than any ancient lawgiver, even in his wildest dreams, had imagined possible. Nor were these precepts a mere barren theory: the change in the lives of those who embraced the faith of Christ was extraordinary; and we have the testimony of contemporary heathen writers, that their conduct was generally marked by peaceable, gentle manners, great benevolence, and undaunted fortitude. What better subjects could a prince desire? Yet because they refused to join in the obscene

and cruel ceremonies and diversions which others frequented, they became the objects of suspicion and hatred. Gradually the mild and patient disciple of Jesus was changed, by cruelty and injustice, into the undaunted but fierce confessor of tenets which he knew hazarded his life; and ere a man arose capable of appreciating Christianity as a system, its professors had been well nigh tortured out of the character* which seems to have recommended them chiefly to his notice.

The fierce disputes of the Christians were a subject of ridicule to the heathens then, as well as to scoffers of all subsequent times: the fact is obvious; the causes much less so; few know how little they have learned when they have remembered a fact: and thus from age to age the

* At the first Council of Nice 318 bishops were assembled: the following is the account given of them by Theodoretus. "Many, like the holy apostle, bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. . . . Paul, bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, had suffered much from the cruelty of Licinius. He had been deprived of the use of both hands by the application of a red hot iron, by which the nerves which give motion to the muscles had been contracted and destroyed. Some had had the right eye torn out, others had lost the right arm. Among the latter sufferers was Paphnutius of Egypt;" according to

odium theologicum has been a by word; repeated by hundreds who have never looked below the surface, and think that all is explained by a phrase. Ere we can well understand why such things are, it will be needful to separate what is thus easily expressed, into several divisions, which may then be referred to some of the worst, and to some of the best feelings of our nature. Thus, much of this so much blamed *odium theologicum* is to be attributed to a very common motive, which influences all men alike, namely—self-interest. When any set of men possess revenues in virtue of certain opinions held by them, they are unwilling to give up their profitable office, be they ministers of state or ministers of religion; and feel angry with

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Socrates, he had lost an eye also. "In short, this was an assembly of martyrs. Yet," adds he, "this holy and celebrated assembly was not free from persons of a contentious spirit" . . . . and no wonder:—who, that had any human frailty remaining, would bear to see one iota of a faith maintained by him at such a cost, impugned by new men, who had no such claims to respect? It was a lamentable, but an almost necessary consequence of circumstances. Hosius, bishop of Cordova in Spain, who himself had lost an eye in the persecution, and who presided over this council, seems to have escaped the danger; and he, and his imperial master and friend, did all in their power to allay those unhappy dissensions.

those, who, by impugning the doctrines they teach, would finally wrench from their hands the power and profit they now enjoy.* This was the feeling of the heathen priests with regard to Christians. Then the very sociability of human nature inclines us to dislike those who differ from us in opinion, whether in politics, science, or whatever else it may be, because this in some measure severs us; and all men like to be approved by their fellows. Hence the violent disputes and hard language applied to opponents on all matters where differences arise, even if in no way connected with religion: for if we have studied a question carefully, we are apt to think that those who do not arrive at the same conclusion, must be wilful in their blindness; and we in consequence think them morally, as well as scientifically wrong. If we have not studied it, and dislike the trouble of doing so, we owe a grudge to those who force us to examine what it would be much easier to take on trust. All these feelings influence men just as much in politics as religion, and there-

* Any one who has watched the progress of a contested election in England, will have seen that it is not theologians alone who hate and persecute those who differ from them in opinion.

fore should at once be set down to the account of weaknesses common to humanity, which Christianity was intended to mend, but which it will never vanquish till its precepts are impressed on the mind while it is yet ductile in early childhood: but of that more hereafter. The last motive belongs to the nobler part of our nature: namely, that which feels truth to be the *summum bonum:* since it is only by attaining it that we can know the Deity who is truth: and he who robs us of it, robs us of our best good. Christianity will not justify our hatred of the robber, but it is a human instinct difficult to control: and the most difficult in earnest minds, who see clearly the worth of the object. A false belief seems as if it must carry with it false motives of action, and consequently wrong actions;—we feel that it would do so in ourselves;—we frequently see evil effects from it in others;—we are, in consequence, anxious and unhappy when we see any in whom we feel a strong interest, in danger of embracing a false faith; and if we feel interested for the whole community, as every man of benevolent feeling will, this anxiety is extended to all. We have examined diligently;—prayed earnestly;—we think we have the truth, and we wish all to par-

take in the benefits we ourselves derive from it; namely, guidance through life, and peace at the hour of death.

Did any of those mangled bishops who met in council, think that the pearl of great price, for which they had resigned every earthly good, had been bought too dear? We could not have looked upon their mutilated bodies, and suppose so: how highly then must they have prized it! and how clear, — to men who had thus weighed the truth they bled for, in those still hours when the flesh shrinks from the coming torture, and the mind has to sustain the body; — how clear must that truth have seemed! Let us for a moment place ourselves in the situation of one of those sufferers for the faith of Christ: — let us see a bright future before us,—for such earnest minds are sanguine in their expectations, — let us imagine ourselves looking forward to a time when all should enter the one fold of Christ, and participate in the blessed hopes and holy life of the saints and martyrs who have gone before us: vice banished, the very horse bridles inscribed with "Holiness to the Lord."—A man arises who teaches what, to our minds, is clearly not the truth: he separates the Godhead, and makes the first step towards a return to poly-

theism, that parent of vice and crime. Let any one then ask himself whether, while signing his name with his left, and only remaining hand, to the creed he believed, he would not feel that the man who impugned that creed, and succeeded in drawing converts to his error, had made the loss of his own right hand in the cause of truth, an useless deprivation?—Would he then have no bitterness in his heart?—and if he could not depend on himself when thus tried, let him no longer scoff at the *odium theologicum*.

Yet there is a fault in this:—"the servant of the Lord must not strive:"—and a little better knowledge of philosophy would have taught those earnest men that when the first enthusiasm raised by a beloved teacher is over, the doctrine must stand on its rational merits. The reason must be convinced; and when the mind is not enough cultivated to reach to conviction by argument, the only wise mode is, to avoid abstract questions, and keep to the practical, which all can understand. Every question raised and argument used by the Areians showed only that their power of conceiving an abstract idea was weak; and the hard language used in condemning them, was, in fact, misap-

plied; for they saw not to what point they were tending; and because they did not, they felt themselves to be unjustly accused. A philosopher would never have been an Areian; an uninstructed man would have been so at heart, whether or not Areius had ever lived.

As usual, when our passions are roused, it is not easy to allay them: Areius and his friends had been harshly dealt with,—for exile in those days was a much severer sentence than it would now be, — but they themselves did more than any others could have done to justify the condemnation; for the slanders with which they persecuted the most zealous bishops of the orthodox catholic faith, were of the most infamous description, and we can hardly avoid thinking that the imputations thrown out by the other party generally, against the moral character of the Areian faction, were not wholly without foundation. These last accused the orthodox bishops of incontinence, which charge they endeavoured to substantiate by the testimony of loose women, who afterwards confessed the falsehood of the accusation: nay on one occasion a charge of murder was brought against Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, notwithstanding that the person said to be assassinated was still

living. He rebutted the charge by producing the living man.

In consequence of false representations of this kind to the emperor, or before councils appointed by him to enquire into the truth of the allegations, many innocent and meritorious men were disgraced and banished. Constantius, the son of Constantinus Magnus was soon won over by the Areians; and, the imperial favour counterbalancing the fewer numbers, the two parties frequently came into collision, and not a little blood was shed and many cruelties perpetrated, by the imperial troops in the cities which ventured to resist the enthronement of Areian bishops, most especially in Alexandria. Councils were held repeatedly to settle the disputed questions, which, as usual, only produced greater dissension; and so many nice and unintelligible distinctions were at last made, in the vain attempt to produce union, that it became almost impossible to say what the real faith was.* The history of

* The broad distinction between Areian and Catholic was simple enough: it was this. The Catholic, i. e. he who held the faith handed down by the chief doctors and martyrs of the church for 300 years,—stated that God, the Self-existent, being necessarily an intelligent Mind, must have wisdom continually emanating from himself, as light from the sun: and this Wisdom, or λογος, spoke

this heresy is but that of all factions; but we may gather from it some notion of the state of society at the time, and it is with this that we are here chiefly concerned.

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through the lips of Jesus, as from the adytum of the temple. This continual emanation was known under the title of eternal generation; and the wisdom thus generated was called the Son of God, the man Jesus being also the Son of God in the same way that Adam is so called; namely, by an act of immediate creation. Thus the wisdom of God was made *manifest* in Jesus, though not confined to that body; for it at the same time maintained the whole order of the universe; and Jesus, being both in body and soul a man, enjoyed, in virtue of his obedience, the intimate union of the Deity with his soul, while, in his body, he suffered the fate of all who preach a new and holier doctrine than sinful men are willing to receive: and by that suffering confirmed the truth of what he taught, and sealed the covenant between God and man.

The Areian, on the contrary, believed that the Son of God was a distinct being;—a second, and inferior Deity: created by the will of the Father before all other created things, but having a beginning, and a will capable of separate action. He was of *a like*, but not of *the same* substance as the eternal God: for, having a beginning he was not eternal. This doctrine pushed to its extreme length made two Deities; but it was modified and moderated so much by some, that it might safely have been left to die out of itself, had the bishops and emperors of those days had the experience in sects which we are only now beginning to acquire.

At the period when the sons of Constantinus Magnus ascended the throne of their father, continual wars, external and internal, had so thinned the free inhabitants, that the land was mainly cultivated by slaves; and as these could not be enrolled in the legions, the armies were recruited from the Germans and the Goths; a practice which had been introduced from the time of Septimius Severus, if not before. The estates of the rich were tilled by slaves, or by serfs whose state was not much better: for their labour was due to the owner of the estate who supported them;* and thus they had little or

* "Far the greater part of the lands of ancient Gaul as well as of the other provinces of the Roman world were cultivated by slaves, or by peasants, whose dependent condition was a less rigid servitude. In such a state the poor were maintained at the expense of their masters who enjoyed the fruit of their labours . . . and the rolls of the tribute were filled only with the names of those citizens who possessed the means of an honorable, or at least a decent subsistence. . . ." The small number of these as compared with the slaves and serfs may be estimated from the fact that—"the Ædui . . . occupied an extent of territory which now (about 1730) contains above 500,000 inhabitants" calculated at the narrowest extent. "In the time of Constantine the territory of the Ædui afforded no more than 25,000 heads of capitation, of whom 7000 were discharged by that prince

no means of acquiring property. We may perhaps form some notion of the state of things thus produced in a country, by looking at those states of America where slavery is still allowed, or some of our own colonies in the last century; where, notwithstanding that the proprietors were nominally christian, scenes were enacted which were more fitted for the times when morality was regulated by the example of Jupiter and his brother gods. The degraded slave population, only partly converted to christianity,—illiterate and sensual;—became an infection in the midst of the land; and the details of the cruelties exercised by the Areian faction on the persons of their opponents, many of them too disgusting to be recounted here,* sufficiently show that chris-

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from the intolerable weight of the tribute.—*Gibbon, Dec. and Fall*, c. 17.

If we take five individuals for each *head* paying tribute we shall probably allow an ample number, and this would give only 125,000 *free* inhabitants. Either the finest part of Gaul must have been nearly a desert, or the bondsmen must have been in the proportion of three to one.

* We are told by Theodoretus in his ecclesiastical history, that when the emperor Constantius sent troops to depose and take Athanasius, the champion of the Catholic church, the soldiers committed fearful excesses

tianity had not yet succeeded in civilising, and purifying society in general.

Nevertheless, though the larger part of the people was as yet little influenced, personally, by the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire, the change, as has already been observed, was not without its effect, and it will not be uninteresting to trace what its influence was on the laws, which must finally give the character to the whole social system. Even to this day, though Christianity is the acknowledged religion of Europe, a very large proportion of the individuals who call themselves by the name of Christ, are personally careless of its precepts, and very far from being well acquainted either with its great truths, or the philosophy founded upon them: —for the gospel doctrine was, by the early Christians, styled the philosophy of Christ. The Deity of the vulgar minded, whether rich or poor, is but a purer Jupiter, and the Son and Holy Spirit, in such

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by order or permission of their commander Sebastianus. In order to force the consecrated virgins, — who were then beginning to be numerous,—to embrace the Areian doctrine, they were stripped of their clothing and placed close to a large fire; and when they refused to yield, cruelly scourged.—*Theod. Hist. Ecc.* lib. ii. c. 14.

minds, hold their subordinate place, and form a council, like the Gods of Olympus:* so difficult is it to free the unphilosophic mind from the trammels of sense: and when called upon to act, the common worldly motives which would have swayed a heathen of tolerably decent conduct, — i. e. honour, ambition, patriotism, and instinctive love, are the sole guides of most men's lives. But when called upon to make or administer laws, the decision is swayed by other principles. There *is* a law not written in the statute book, not consecrated, alas! by general usage, not upheld by human penalties;—but it is one to which the injured can appeal. There *is* an acknowledged, though unseen tribunal, before which that appeal will be heard; and men shrink from provoking the sentence which may there be pronounced. Evil doing never fails to bring evil consequences;—the next generation sees that the results, which those whose judgment has been formed upon that unwritten law, can easily foretell, arrive with the certainty and severity of a legal sentence; and while contem-

* Milton has gone far to degrade our notions of the Deity, by the material imagery which he has used in speaking of things which never ought to have been made the subject of such description.

plating the recorded breach of the divine statute, and the present infliction of the threatened penalty, under which they may possibly themselves suffer, learn wisdom, and the wrong is amended. Thus has Christianity worked; in some instances indeed on the individual, but more generally on the frame of society; by removing temptations to evil, and in some degree sheltering innocence on its entry into life, from the pollution of thought which the public exhibition of unblushing vice in polytheistic countries can hardly fail to occasion.

One of the first laws of Constantinus Magnus, dated A. D. 325,* deals with the evil which in the times of the republic had more than once brought the state to the verge of destruction, and which, even in its less glaring operation, was scarcely less fatal, by reducing the number of free proprietors so far, that they had scarcely a voice in the government: I mean the exorbitant rate of interest charged for the loans which the poorer owners of land often needed for the cultivation of their farms; and which had been mercilessly exacted by the rich. This

* Codex Theodosianus. Edit. Ritter. Lips. 1736. tom. i. p. 266.

law forbids those who lend money on the security of corn and other products of the land, to take *more than a third* of the produce thus pledged. What must have been the ruinous usury previously paid by the needy! The same law restrains the yearly interest for a loan of money, to five per cent. It was the first time that any effectual check had been imposed on such practices: but this law was followed up by subsequent emperors; and A. D. 386, a penalty was imposed of four times the amount of the sum illegally received.

A. D. 319, we find another law of Constantinus M. requiring all persons to fulfil their agreements as to sale, unless some fraud on the part of the buyer be proved, even though a change in price should make the bargain a less advantageous one before the goods were delivered.

A. D. 320, a law of Constantinus M. rescinds all the ancient and severe laws against debtors, and enacts that the creditor shall merely receive back again what he has lent. It was the ancient law of the republic that the bodies of debtors should be divided into pieces and distributed to their creditors, if unable otherwise to satisfy their claims: a law indeed not acted upon, so far as we know, but breathing of a bar-

barism happily unknown in more modern times. The other provision of the Roman law, allowing the insolvent debtor to be sold, or held as a slave by the creditor, was however far from being obsolete at that time.

Other laws of Constantinus Magnus and his sons forbid governors of provinces to abuse their power by compelling marriages, or sales of goods: restrict the wantonness of divorce: provide that children of poor men sold to purchase food, shall be set free again after a limited period of service: and that cattle and slaves shall not be taken in pledge for a debt, that the land may not remain uncultivated.

As the whole of the laws in the Theodosian code consist of imperial decrees, supplemental to what might be called the common law of Rome, we must conclude that the practices here prohibited, were common enough to make these special provisions necessary: such a code therefore affords a fair view of the then state of society, and opens before us scenes of oppression and injustice on every side, which may make us thankful to live at a period when Christianity, even if somewhat weakened in its contest with a corrupt world, has succeeded at least in making such things infamous.

If we turn from the picture afforded by the

Theodosian code to the nations which were either stationary in their own abodes, as in India; or pressing on the frontiers of the Roman empire, as the Persians, Goths, Huns, &c. we shall find that if they were free from some of the vices of civilisation, those of barbarism were not small. Several of the victories of the Romans over the more settled German tribes, as well as over the wandering invaders from the north of Asia, were won over men disabled by brutal intoxication: and the invasions of these hordes were marked by rapine and slaughter so extensive as to leave the country nearly a desert. Yet even these, when forced forward by the pressure of more barbarous tribes from behind, struck by the splendour of a civilisation to which they had hitherto been strangers, and the self-devotion of some of the Christian priests, who had become their prisoners, embraced the faith of the empire; and of the Goths, who at a later period captured Rome under Alaric, many were Christian, and not unmindful of their profession, even in the midst of scenes where men are most wont to forget the precepts of the Gospel;—Christianity moderated the horrors of a successful assault on a rich and populous city: even though the assailants were barbarians!

At the period we are now treating of, the

christian religion was established in the kingdom of Armenia, and though persecuted, the converts to that faith were so numerous in Persia, that Constantinus Magnus addressed a letter in their behalf to the Persian monarch, who, moved by his renown in arms, had sent ambassadors to his court to ask his alliance. In India also the christian faith was propagated, as we are told by ecclesiastical writers, not only by Bartholomæus, the apostle, which may perhaps be uncertain, but by two young men, who having been shipwrecked on the coast, grew into favour with the reigning prince; and were allowed to make converts, and build churches; one of them having been consecrated bishop by Athanasius, when he returned to obtain further aid in his undertaking.

In other countries also, the captives seem not unfrequently to have become apostles of christianity, and with signal success, if we may credit the writers of the time: for, even should some of the marvels they relate, be doubted, it is hardly likely that they should be misinformed as to the general fact that christian priests were sent from the Roman empire to distant countries, at the request of their rulers: such we are told was the case with a nation inhabiting

the borders of the Euxine.* Many also of the surrounding barbarians entered into the Roman service, and these carried back with them enough liking for the more luxurious habits of the south, to excite their countrymen to embrace the same course of life. This, in the end proved fatal to the Roman power; but the nations who poured in upon the empire had thus acquired a certain degree of civilization, and were prepared to receive a purer faith.

Many, especially among the country people still clung to the ancient superstitions: hence the name *pagani* or pagans, namely, inhabitants of *pagi* or country villages. This is always the case when great changes are in progress: ignorance and indolence are alike unwilling to part with the prejudices of their youth; and though polytheism was by degrees dying out, we can hardly expect that christianity would find more of real converts among the votaries of this world than it does at present. When it was the road to honour it was professed outwardly, but the inward purification of the heart which it required, was little thought of by the candidate for the præfecture or the consulship:

* Vide Socrat. Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 20.

the faith of Christ was then, as too frequently now, a name merely, and the life of the courtier or the soldier was stained by many of the vices of the former empire, curbed only by a somewhat severer code of law, as far as morality was concerned. And thus it was in all the countries where christianity was received: as soon as the persecution which generally attends a new creed, had ceased to purify it from its lukewarm professors, a transfusion like that of gases took place between the old life and the new: the habits of the wild Goth, or the still wilder Hun, Vandal, or Frank, gained a little more gentleness, but their christianity assumed a large share of the fierceness and superstition of their previous life. And this process has been going on ever since its promulgation: the action and reaction of the new creed on the old habits, and the old habits on the new creed, soon changed both very considerably; and our present civilisation has still a large share of heathenism clinging to it in the common world notions of the day: while public opinion, on the other hand, is ruled by not a few of the maxims of christianity: but the time is probably still distant when our social code will be in strict conformity with the example and precepts of our

Great Master. Like Balaam, however, the true seer of the future may exclaim with the certainty of faith, "I shall see it, but not now; I shall behold it but not nigh:"—for the teaching of Christ leads to the perfection of man: his promises afford all that humanity sighs for; his philosophy remedies all that the wisest and the best have ever believed or taught; and his example furnishes a guide which the affections no less than the intellect will be eager to accept.

CHAPTER I.

From the Death of Constantinus Magnus, a. d. 337, to the Accession of Theodosius Magnus, a.d. 379.

THE immense empire which Constantinus Magnus had consolidated under his vigorous sway, was divided by his desire into five portions, three of which were given to his surviving sons,* and two to his two nephews: but in the Roman Empire the will of the soldiery was paramount; and whether urged by any secret practices, or led by the caprice which so often swayed them, the troops declared that they would submit to none but the sons of their great Emperor, and suddenly breaking into open sedition, they murdered all the family of Constantinus save his three sons and two nephews of tender age, who were saved from

* Crispus, his eldest and most promising son, had been put to death some years before, on some false charge, which his hasty execution left no means of refuting in time.

slaughter by the care of those who had the charge of them. This led to a fresh division of the empire; the dissensions consequent upon which very soon brought the elder and younger into open war; and Constantinus II., who was the aggressor, was killed in a skirmish about three years after his father's death.

The sons of Constantinus Magnus, as has sometimes been observed of the sons of great men, did not inherit the talents of their father: this is not wonderful; for what is called careful education, namely, the holding the youth as it were in leading strings, and never allowing him the free exercise of his own will, lest his inexperience should mislead him, is fatal to all firmness of character, and usually produces one of two evils; i. e. either the yoke is wholly cast off, and the young man, in the joy of his new liberty, rushes into worse excesses than those who have been less controlled; or he remains a weak character to the end of his life, and yields to any who will take the pains to guide him. The two surviving princes appear to have taken the two opposite courses: Constans was accused of vices which lost him his popularity and was slain by the orders of a successful rebel, about ten years after his brother's death: Con-

stantius, on the contrary, never sought to emancipate himself from the strict rules of his education. He was chaste, temperate, and moderate in his desires: patient of toil in the field, and so indifferent to the delicacies of the table that his health was never shaken by the smallest excess.* Nevertheless the benefit which his subjects ought to have derived from these good qualities, were neutralized by the facility with which he received impressions from those about him, and the consequent injustice which he frequently committed. Had he been wont to exercise his own judgment, one whose mode of life was so frugal and sober would never have had a thousand cupbearers, and a thousand cooks, besides attendants innumerable, whose salaries consumed the revenue, and whose unauthorized exactions oppressed the people.

This known weakness of character encouraged the Areian party, which, like all new sects, was active and enterprising, and some of the eastern bishops having embraced these opinions, their proximity gave them the advantage of such frequent communication with the young emperor, that he was soon persuaded to adopt their views. It is almost impossible to retrace

* Amm. Marcell. lib. xxi. c. 16.

a false step, and Constantinus Magnus had made one when he attempted to enforce uniformity of opinion by temporal penalties. The Areians, less numerous than the orthodox believers, when they found themselves likely to be oppressed by the ruling party, employed every art to attain power; and, when the imperial favour was extended to them, used it unmercifully. Athanasius, whose firmness in adhering to the Nicene creed, and talent in defending it, made him formidable, was the object of their especial hatred, and as early as the latter part of the reign of Constantinus Magnus charges had been made against him of so heinous a nature that it was impossible to pass them over in silence. The cause was sent before a council of bishops, who, after he had proved his innocence, and was departed, condemned him upon a fresh charge which had not been mentioned before. The emperor, anxious for the peace of his dominions; perhaps influenced also by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, an Areian, but from whose hands he finally received baptism,—sent Athanasius into honourable exile.*

* He was sent to Treves, in Gaul. Theodoretus (Hist. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 2) gives a letter from Constantinus

The friends of the bishop were naturally provoked at so unjust a persecution, and when the imperial power passed into weaker hands, both parties broke into open feud. Every fresh synod did but augment the evil; harsh language was used on both sides;—the people, as usual when their passions are roused, supported the cause of their favourite with insurrectionary violence, and the empire was convulsed upon questions so abstruse, that when we first approach the subject, it is with astonishment at the insanity of the contest. A little closer view, however, enables us to perceive that the

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II. to the church of Alexandria, requiring the clergy and people to receive back their bishop, and adding that his father had sent him into exile merely to preserve his life from the machinations of his enemies. Nor is this an exaggerated expression; for the ability of this prelate had made him so much an object of dread to the opposite party, that the most unworthy means were resorted to in order to bring about his ruin. Among other things he was charged with the murder of one Arsenius, whose hand he was said to have cut off for the sake of using it for magical purposes. The emperor called a synod of bishops, and sent the cause before them, appointing two, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nikæa, as his deputies. In the mean time the friends of Athanasius had discovered the man whom he was said to have murdered, and when he sailed for Tyre in order to justify himself before the council, he took

strife, however lamentable, was almost inevitable. Continual wars, either with foreign invaders, or between different pretenders to the empire, and the consequent insecurity of life and property, had engendered that rude ferocity and recklessness among the people which generally is found under such circumstances, and which rendered them unable to comprehend the mild spirit of the Gospel. In our estimate of these times we are apt to put cause for effect, and because long predisposing causes had brought about the decay of literature and art, and counteracted the better influences of Christianity, it

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Arsenius with him. The scene which followed was curious. On entering the assembly he asked if there were any there who knew Arsenius personally, and on being answered in the affirmative by many, a figure closely muffled was brought forward, and Athanasius uncovering the face, showed the features of the living Arsenius. A pause ensued, for the charge was disproved; but presently a fresh clamour arose: he was thus muffled, it was said, in order to hide the mutilated arm. The bishop then raised the robe, first on one side and then on the other, so as to show both arms, exclaiming, "It has not pleased God to give man three hands, and behold! Arsenius has two."—But even this did not silence his enemies, and after he had left the council he was condemned on the futile charge of having threatened to stop the exportation of grain from Alexandria. His exile followed this.

has been too much the custom to impute the decay of christian love to the virulence of religious faction, while in truth these very factions arose from the ignorance and increasing barbarism of the age.

It is not easy in modern Europe even to figure to ourselves the state of the population when reading was the luxury of the rich, to be indulged in only by those who could afford so costly a taste; when none of the lower classes, and few or none of the female sex, ever turned to books for information or pastime, and when generals, and even emperors, were frequently wholly illiterate. The market place and the temple; or, after Christianity was established, the church, were the places of resort for news: there men met and discussed the events of the time; and, if among the people there collected, some circumstance were artfully related with a view to make an impression, it caused far more emotion, and was more likely to create a tumult than now, when most can hear in their own home, or among a few neighbours with whom they can quietly discuss it, the news of the day. Yet, even now, what excesses do we not see perpetrated when the passions of the multitude are excited, not indeed on religious subjects,—

that is not the fashion of the nineteenth century,—but on political ones!

When the Bishop of Constantinople, who had been one of the main supporters of Areius, died, Paulus was elected in his room; a man of orthodox opinions, and whom the deceased had in some measure designated as his successor. The choice was distasteful to the emperor; and he insisted on the deposition of Paulus, and the translation of Eusebius of Nicomedia to that see. This the people seem to have borne quietly, but on the death of Eusebius they again chose Paulus for their bishop, while the Areians, meeting in another place, elected Macedonius; upon which the two factions came to open war, and frequent skirmishes took place, in which many were killed.

Constantius was during this time at Antioch, and hearing of these insurrections, he sent his general, Hermogenes, to Constantinople, directing him to remove Paulus, and seat the Areian bishop in his place. When this became known, the infuriated populace, determined to maintain their right to choose their own bishop, rushed to the house where Hermogenes was lodged, set it on fire, and seizing upon him, murdered not only him, but several others in the tumult. The

emperor, justly incensed by this outrage, hastened to Constantinople—expelled Paulus—and mulcted the city of half the daily donation, which, from his father's time had usually been bestowed on the people.* He took no farther measures at that time: but Paulus, when expelled, betook himself to Julius, bishop of Rome, and three other bishops in the like predicament having likewise applied to him, Julius, apparently not unwilling to extend his influence, wrote severe letters to the several churches, requiring them to receive back their bishops. Constantius, who had returned to Antioch, no sooner heard that Paulus had been reinstated at Constantinople, than he sent his prætorian prefect, Philippus, thither with orders to remove Paulus, and place Macedonius in his room. The bishop was sent for in the emperor's name, and privately conveyed on board a ship which sailed with him to Thessalonica, ere the people be-

* Socrat. Hist. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 13. The quantity mentioned (800,000 measures) appears incredible: but the circumstance, at any rate, shows how large a portion of the population was without adequate means of support. It will explain the cause of many of the seditions, for all those maintained, either wholly or in part, at the public expense, must have been comparatively idle.

came aware of what had happened, and the præfect, taking Macedonius in his own chariot, proceeded with him to the principal church, accompanied by a considerable body of armed men. The crowd by this time was immense; for all were curious to know what had happened, and the narrow way became entirely blocked up. The soldiers, remembering what had taken place when Hermogenes had been charged with a similar business, and thinking the impediment to their progress intentional, fell upon the people sword in hand, and cut their way through, without hindrance from their commander. Many were trodden to death or suffocated in the crowd;—many slain;—and finally the Areian bishop reached the church, passing over the bodies of upwards of three thousand of his flock!

Tumults of the same kind took place at Alexandria, which each party in turn charged on the other: synods of the two factions met* and made decrees against each other, and every year seemed to lessen the hope of domestic peace, till finally, A. D. 347, Constantius and Constans,

* The public post horses were worn out, says Ammianus, with the continual running hither and thither of the bishops to the different synods.

who then divided the empire between them, agreed to call a synod at Sardica to settle the question as to the expelled prelates. Three hundred and seventy bishops met, and after a full examination of the charges against Athanasius, acquitted him of all, whereupon Constans wrote a very peremptory letter to his brother,* requiring the reinstatement of the persecuted bishop. He was accordingly recalled, and received with much joy by the people of Alexandria, but the murder of Constans the year after by the rebel Magnentius, left him without a protector, and Constantius was soon persuaded to pronounce sentence of death against him upon the

* The letter sent by Constans to his brother, insisting on the recall of Athanasius from exile, was carried by two bishops who had been present at the Council, and one military officer. Constantius was at that time at Antioch, and Stephanus, the Areian bishop of the place had recourse to a most shameful stratagem in order to throw discredit on the embassy. The two bishops were lodged in a house at some distance from their colleague; and taking advantage of this, an emissary of Stephanus, as was afterwards proved, "went to a courtesan and told her that some strangers had just arrived who desired to pass the night with her. He placed fifteen men belonging to his faction in concealment near," — and having brought the woman to the house, and pointed out to her the room occupied by Euphratas, one of the bi-

pretext that he had been the cause of dissension between him and his deceased brother. Alexandria was occupied by a force of five thousand men, the church in which Athanasius was officiating was surrounded, and though, amid the throng, the bishop passed out unhurt and escaped, the town was subjected to the cruelty and license of military occupation.

It would be wearisome to detail all the excesses committed during the ensuing period of Areian supremacy: Constantius was unwearied in his endeavours to force his own religious opinions on the recusant churches, till finally, at the Council of Ariminum, A. D. 359, between stratagem and force, he obtained the signature

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shops, desired her to enter. When the courtesan entered the room of Euphratas, he heard the sound of her footsteps and asked who was there? for it was then dark. She spoke to him, and Euphratas was much troubled, for he thought it was the devil imitating the voice of a woman, and he called upon Christ the Saviour, for aid." In the mean time Onager (the name of the agent) returned with his companions to denounce the apparent crime: the noise they made roused the rest of the household, and seven of them, together with the woman, were taken into custody. The cause was brought before the emperor, when the woman and one of the young men confessed the whole plot, whereupon Stephanus was deposed from his bishopric. Theodoret. Hist. Ecc. l. ii. c. 9, 10.

of most of the bishops then present,—for many had departed,—to a creed in which the watchword of the Catholics* was omitted. Some, however, refused, and were expelled from their bishoprics and banished, all protested against the violence which had been practised against them, and fresh persecutions followed, in which blood was again shed.

Doubtless we must allow for some exaggeration on the part of the writers from whom we receive these accounts, for they were of the Catholic party; but even after deducting somewhat for this, we find a large amount of rapacity and cruelty chargeable on the Areian bishops, especially on George of Cappadocia, who was placed at Alexandria in the room of Athanasius, and who licensed the cruellest outrages on the adherents to the Nicene creed. We cannot wonder that a continuance of such scenes brought even the doctrine of Christ himself into disrepute.

It was during this time,—while the followers of Areius were inflicting tortures on those who maintained the Nicene faith, and these in their turn were lavishing the most violent abuse on

* ομοουσιος, i. e. partaker of the same existence.

the Areians, that Julianus, the young cousin of Constantius grew up to manhood. Although he and his brother Gallus had been kept in a sort of honourable captivity, their education had not been neglected: but learning was now declining, as generally happens in a country where the profession of arms is from necessity the principal one; and the instruction afforded by the Christian teachers of the young princes had more of superstitious observance than of the all-embracing philosophy of Christ. The simplicity of the early Christian rites had given way to much that was gorgeous and impressive, but to an inquiring and acute mind there was so evident a discrepancy between the life and precepts of the Great Teacher and the lessons now taught, and the bitterness with which sects, all professing themselves his followers, attacked each other, had so little in it of the love which ought to have distinguished the disciples of Christ, that it cannot be a matter of surprise, if, as the youths grew up, it inspired some distrust as to the truth of a faith thus preached, which showed itself in their characters. Gallus, the elder of the two, as soon as his elevation to the rank of Cæsar freed him from tutelage, indulged in the debaucheries and cruelties into

which weak princes are generally tempted by despotic power, and sought to make himself amends for the strictness of his education by a license of conduct equal to that of the worst heathen emperors; thus throwing a yet further discredit on the Christian name. Julianus, on the other hand, disgusted by a system from which peace and love seemed to be banished, and which had lost its power over the lives of men by addressing itself altogether to the intellect in questions too subtile to be within the apprehension of the multitude, looked back with a longing eye towards the brighter days of heathenism; and seems to have thought that with a sound philosophy for the higher, and a gorgeous ceremonial for the lower classes, the peace of the world would be better maintained.

The dangers of the empire, and the consequent necessity of having a sovereign capable of originating orders near the scene of action, had led to the appointment of Cæsars by former emperors, Constantius had endeavoured to provide for the safety of the eastern frontier by appointing his cousin Gallus to that office; and when he suffered the penalty of his misconduct, Julianus was raised to that dignity and sent into Gaul, which had been so wasted by the incur-

sions of the neighbouring barbarians,* that the province was nearly ruined. With very inadequate resources, and no military experience, the young Cæsar soon contrived to supply the want of both; and so checked the ravages of the transrhenane tribes, that the province recovered its prosperity, and he himself gained the grateful affection both of the army and of the people: so far, indeed, that when his cousin sent for some of his best troops in order to reinforce his eastern army, the legions refused to march, and hastily proclaimed their young leader emperor. The death of Constantius almost immediately after, delivered the empire from the danger of a new civil war, and Julianus succeeded quietly to the throne which he appeared so well to merit.

The character and actions of this prince have

* Though the Romans, like the Greeks, included all but their own provincials in this category, a sort of semi-civilisation seems to have prevailed rather extensively in what we now call Germany. The German tribes had their cities, their slaves, their agriculture; and, if we may credit Tacitus, a system of morals far more pure than the luxurious Romans: an opinion confirmed by what we read of many of these tribes when they fixed themselves in Gaul. Unfortunately they had not any literature which has reached us in a form which may enable us to judge of their habits and their history.

been the subject of so much contest between ancient heathens and modern unbelievers on the one hand, who extol; and Christians on the other, who vituperate this emperor with all the acrimony of party, that it is difficult to arrive at the truth; I may be therefore excused perhaps, if I pause somewhat longer than the nature of this work would seem to warrant, in order to place both his character and his proceedings in a truer light.

It is impossible to doubt the ability of a prince who, entrusted at the age of twenty-four with the command of an army, without any previous service or instruction, knew how to profit by his own first mistakes so well and so promptly, as to rescue the important province of Gaul from the hands of its invaders in a short space of time: but his judgment in after life seems to have been obscured by an overweening vanity which was fatal to himself and to the empire. His education had been in part confided to Eusebius of Nicomedia, an Areian, and as far as we can judge from what is recorded of this prelate, not of very scrupulous honesty in the means he used to accomplish his purposes. It was not from such a man, nor from the Areian system that Julianus was likely to gain a favourable

impression of the philosophy of the Gospel. The true argument against polytheism, so triumphantly urged by the early preachers, that there *can* be but ONE eternal, self-existent, infinite power, and that divine worship is not due to any other, was lost in the Areian system, and Julianus appears to have formed the notion that if it were possible to extend the worship to two, it was very possible to extend it to more; and that Christianity might enter into fellowship with Polytheism. He argued badly, that was the fault of the times, but he seems at first to have thought only of the union of all as the means of restoring peace and strength to the empire. The precepts of the Gospel and those of the Greek philosophers differed not much, the christian ceremonies were beginning to assume the gorgeousness of the heathen rites, why not agree to fuse all rival sects and religions in one? It seems to have been with this view that he recalled the exiles, and exhorted them to peace and good fellowship,* promising

* "Having called together the heads of the dissenting Christians," says Ammianus, "he caused them and their congregations to be introduced into the palace, where he civilly exhorted them to lay aside their religious differences, and serve him bravely, notwithstand-

that he himself would preside in a synod for the settling of all disputes. This probably was his first intention; the obstinacy with which all resisted his scheme seems to have provoked him, and the flattery of the polytheistic party completed his change of views; so that from wishing to blend all sects into one whole, he in his anger endeavoured to root out those whom he could not persuade. Not that he authorized absolute

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ing the varieties of their faith. He did this" continues the heathen historian, "in order that their dissensions being increased by licence, he might not have to fear an unanimous people; for there are no beasts so at enmity with man as Christians are with one another. Often he cried, 'Hear me whom the Alemanni and the Franci have listened to'—in this imitating, but not cleverly, a saying of Marcus Aurelius."

It seems, nevertheless, more probable that Julianus, on the point of undertaking the Persian war, was really anxious for unanimity among his subjects: the exhortation "ut quisque, nullo vetante religioni suæ serviret intrepidus" seems to point at military service; and the vanity which formed the ugly feature in his character, might lead him to suppose that after being successful in so much, the imperial admonition would not be disregarded, and that he should effect what no sovereign before him had done. The character of the man, always ready to attempt what others had failed in, makes this probable. If it was a favourite project, its failure may have incensed him more, especially at what he would think the senseless obstinacy of the Christians.

violence, but those who saw the tendency his mind was taking, thought to please him, probably, by outgoing his orders. His own measures appear to have been partly fiscal,—for he increased the taxes on Christians,—and partly intended to bring contempt on a sect which he found so intractable; such, for instance, as forbidding them to teach grammar or rhetoric in their schools. Added to this he made an attempt to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem; seeming anxious no less to win the favour of all his subjects, than to throw discredit on the Christians, by restoring the people whom they considered to be expelled from their country by the especial vengeance of heaven. The attempt was however defeated by fiery eruptions from the soil, which destroyed the workmen, and compelled them to abandon the undertaking.*

The great enterprise, however, of this sovereign's short reign was the invasion of Persia; and here his want of judgment became apparent: for, elated by his successes, and forgetting how important it was to the empire to secure to it, if possible, some years of peace in order to reduce the heavy imposts under which the people

* Amm. l. xxiii. c. 1.

had groaned, he rejected the overtures of Sapor, when that monarch, frightened by the fame and the preparations of the young emperor, sent to propose an honorable peace. Nothing short of the conquest of Persia would satisfy his ambition; and when he began his invasion, instead of securing to himself a retreat in case of a reverse of fortune, he left no chance of safety to his army but in advance. The consequences were most disastrous: he himself was slain in a skirmish, when the Persians had assembled so great a force as to bar the further progress of the Romans; and Jovianus, who was elected by the army to conduct the retreat, had to buy their safety by ignominious concessions.

It is not often that the personal character of a sovereign has so large an influence on the fate of an empire: Julianus had great talents, was learned, temperate, and chaste; but his vanity and levity of disposition neutralized all these higher qualities, and he hastened the ruin of his country. Confident in his own skill, and devoted at the same time to a superstition which even his heathen admirers blamed, he suffered himself to be deluded by lying auguries, and neglected the measures which a prudent general would have taken. Instead of inuring his

soldiers to the temperance and activity proper for a campaign of so much toil and difficulty, he devoted his thoughts to the seducing them from their christian profession, by distributing his abundant sacrifices to all who chose to partake of them; adding a gratuity in money to every one who would sacrifice. The consequence was that all wise discipline was lost; the men were seen lying about in the camp oppressed with gluttonous excess;* the iron warriors of Constantinus Magnus who had carried the *labarum* victoriously over every field where they fought, were replaced by a very different race, and he led an army enervated by such a system, and dispirited, probably, by no longer seeing that triumphant standard at their head,†—to meet the whole force of Persia; madly destroying, at the same time, all means of retreat or communication with his own empire.

The attempt to re-establish the ancient polytheism proved a signal failure: the age had outgrown it, and it was but the setting up of a dead tree which the first gale must again throw down.

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* Amm. lxxii. c. 6. Theod. Hist. Eccl. l. iii. c. 17.

† Julianus threw aside the labarum which had led the armies of Constantinus to victory so often that his enemies thought it had a magical virtue.

Even had Julianus survived the Persian expedition, there can scarcely be a doubt that his endeavours would have been unavailing; for the historian of his reign, himself a heathen, and personally attached to the emperor, blames his attachment to the antiquated ceremonies of the old superstitions in no measured terms: and with Julianus the last hope of their revival passed away. Jovianus was a Christian, and made it his boast;* and Valentinianus, who succeeded him, had rendered himself remarkable by striking an heathen priest, who in the temple of Fortune, had sprinkled him with the water of lustration in the presence of the emperor.† The laws in favour of Christianity were

* When offered the purple he is said to have declined it, saying, "Being a Christian myself, I cannot claim authority over the troops of Julianus" . . . to which the soldiery replied, "Do not hesitate, O Emperor . . as if we held impious sentiments . . . you will reign over Christians. The most aged among us have been instructed in doctrine by Constantinus." Theod. Hist. Ecc. l. iv. c. 1.

† Theod. Hist. Ecc. l. iii. c. 16. Sozomenes relates that Valentinianus tore out the piece of his robe which had been touched by the water, and threw it disdainfully away. He was banished by the emperor for this contempt, but recalled by Jovianus. The hasty temper which this action betrayed shewed itself sometimes un-

re-enacted by these princes and became thenceforward the law of the empire: and this law no long time after was collected and published.* Valentinianus, nevertheless, with a wise moderation, afforded a complete tolerance to those who still professed polytheism, and employed Christians and Heathens without distinction.

At that time the profession of Christianity still implied something of earnestness;—some seriousness of religious feeling, and many, then as now, troubled themselves little as to their fate after death, and either had no inclination to be troubled with scruples before, or had a few notions of honour and patriotism handed down to them from their ancestors, which they thought sufficient for all useful purposes. They had sufficient employment for their time in business or pleasure, and found in the unseemly disputes of Christians a plausible excuse for not looking more deeply into a system which claimed so much power over the heart, and showed so little over the lives of many of its professors. It was not till Christianity became a qualification

fortunately in his subsequent life and reign: but he was an illiterate soldier, who, like many more at this period, owed his elevation to his military talent only.

* It still exists under the title of the Theodosian Code.

for filling the great offices of the state, that such men became converts, and when they did, they brought to their new faith nothing but a cold assent to a form of words, without any of that heartfelt conviction which forms a motive of action. These were not the converts which the first preachers of the Gospel had sought or gained: *they* were to be found among the thinkers, were they high or low; and with them Christianity prevailed, less because it was a divine and supernatural revelation than because it was the expression of thoughts which lay deep in the hearts of multitudes. They had not indeed yet found a voice that could utter them, but they hailed with enthusiasm, when it appeared, the embodiment of all that their dim and confused wishes had presented to their minds like lovely dreams, rather than possible realities, and these men were Christians indeed.

There has been no time, perhaps there never will be on this side the grave, when earnest thinkers will not dwell on what *should be* rather than what *is*,—nor can we wish it otherwise, for it is from these visions of the Seer that the next age takes its lessons of wisdom: but when did the "practical men" of the day ever fail to mock at and oppose "those strange notions so

unlike what every body else thinks and does?" —and therefore the progress of good is slow, even though ONE who "spake as never man spake" has marked the path to virtue and happiness. Nevertheless when we look at the vain attempts of Julianus to prop up a dead system, we may gain confidence for our own times, and believe that the efforts of man cannot arrest the purpose of God: and the martyr of this age,—for even modern times have their martyrs,—may console himself under the ridicule or the obloquy which may dog his path by the thought that his wish having been fashioned in conformity with his Maker's will, it *must* finally be accomplished; and the sooner, if "by patient" but firm "continuance in well doing" he afford a practical comment on his doctrine.

The empire never recovered from the blow it had received in Persia, and, shortly after his elevation, Valentinianus shared the imperial power with his brother Valens whom he sent to Constantinople to rule over the provinces of the East, while he himself took up his residence at Milan that he might be able to watch over the restless barbarians, who, encouraged by the reverses of the late reign, were now every where pressing on the frontiers. His military skill

enabled him to defeat and repulse them, but the North was swarming with inhabitants, and the provinces of Rome were weakened and depopulated by the causes already noticed; the very necessity of a large military establishment increased the evil, by making it impossible to relax the imposts which were grinding down the free proprietors, and it was evident that it must soon come to a question in the provinces whether the repelling the barbarians, or the receiving them, would most distress the inhabitants.

No severe measures had been taken against the polytheistic party after the death of Julianus, though his officers had been removed from posts of charge; but the rebellion of Procopius, who professed to have received the purple from that emperor, and who had gained temporary possession of Constantinople and some of the adjacent provinces, raised the apprehensions of the reigning sovereign; and when the defeat and death of the usurper left leisure for such proceedings, the unsuccessful party was persecuted with great severity. The crime of magic was at that time believed to be a possible one, and as some of the disappointed heathen priests and philosophers had had recourse to such means in order to read the future, an enquiry was instituted which gave

rise to arrests and executions so numerous that even the soldiers complained, and declared themselves unable to guard so large a body of prisoners. The privileges of Roman citizens were suspended, and torture and confiscation filled the empire with alarm, yet so fixed was the superstition in the minds of all that no one seems to have hazarded a doubt of the reality of the crime: the only complaint was of the excessive severity of the punishment:—the facts were not denied.

Valentinianus, meantime was occupied with the internal regulation of the empire, and though his own life had been spent in camps, and though he was himself illiterate, and in moments of passion, ferocious, he was apparently anxious that others should have the advantages that had been wanting to himself. He began to form schools of learning throughout the empire, and the rules prescribed for professors and students had something of the form of modern university discipline: it is the first record we have of any thing of the kind.* Besides this, he founded a medical establishment to supply aid to the poor as well as the rich, under the supervision of four-

* Cod. Theod. lib. xiv. tit. ix.

teen physicians, who each took a separate district.* By another of his laws he forbade the exposure of new-born children, and required that all should bring up their own offspring. As these laws had not been enacted before, and as they certainly had not their origin in any increasing civilisation of the age, we must place them among those wrung from the illiterate emperor by the feeling of that higher law which he sincerely reverenced, though his ungoverned nature did not always conform to it.

The character of Valens differed much from that of his brother, for he was weak and timid, and though by no means cruel by disposition, was not unfrequently made so by his fears, or his indolent acquiescence in the acts of others. About three years after his accession, having sought baptism and received it from the hands of an Areian prelate, he was persuaded to adopt that creed, and a persecution of the orthodox was again instituted in the eastern provinces, under the authority at least, if not with the full acquiescence of the yielding emperor. The heathens joined with the Areians, and these last, in their anxiety to depress their adversaries, ac-

* Cod. Theod. lib. xiii. tit. iii.

cepted these very questionable allies.* This alliance strengthened the enmity between Areian and Catholic to an irreconcileable point; for these last thought they now saw in it the confirmation of all they had thought respecting the tendency of the Areian tenets, and considered those who professed them rather as persons relapsing into polytheism, than as fellow Christians; and we must allow, even now that we can look on these disputes with more calmness, that if the orthodox party were intemperate in their language, the conduct of the Areians almost justified it, so gross were the outrages even on common decency, perpetrated in the name of that sect, though probably by persons who cared nothing for any religious motive at all. Indeed much of the scandal thrown on religion by the acts of its so-called partisans, would be re-

* A letter from Peter, bishop of Alexandria, the successor of Athanasius, is preserved by Theodoretus, l. iv. c. 22, wherein the excesses committed by the partisans of Lucius, the intrusive Areian bishop, are detailed. Holy virgins were stripped naked and dragged about the city in that state till they expired;—the churches were profaned by naked men, who preached all manner of licentiousness, seated in the episcopal chair; and the heathen populace welcomed the Areian bishop as sent to them by Serapis.

moved, were the motives of the actors more visible; religion is the pretext, but private enmity or private interest generally lies at the bottom of all persecution. There may be exceptions, but they are few.

I have hitherto been obliged to consider the Roman empire as the representative of the human race; for though beyond its boundaries various wild tribes, and some semi-civilised nations were to be found, yet we have scarcely any historical notice of their existence, and it is only when these ruder tribes came in contact with nations that had a literature, that we know any thing of their migrations or their customs. The astonishment and terror inspired by the sudden advance of the Huns, a nomade race from the north of Asia, when, driven back from China, they turned their course towards Europe, first makes us acquainted with these tribes, who seem to have existed unchanged during we know not how many ages, and who have left in Tartary still,—though scattered and yielding fast to the inroads of more civilised nations,—a race not very unlike their progenitors. Their herds and their tents were their riches and their home; and they moved on like a flight of locusts, consuming and devastating as they went.

Their skill in horsemanship made them formidable to more settled nations, for none who had not been accustomed for many generations to a roving life could find a cavalry capable of opposing them, and even the best military tactics fail before a force numerous enough to envelope the opposing army in a cloud of horsemen too rapid in their evolutions to be pursued or effectually defeated. They came first upon the Goths on the other side the Danube, who, divided by their factions, and alarmed by the novelty of the invasion, offered no effectual resistance. Fritigern, at the head of that portion of the nation which had embraced Christianity, entreated the emperor of the East to afford them an asylum in his dominions: Athanaric, who had held the supreme rule, was a bigoted heathen, and had inflicted severe punishments on the Christians: of course he expected small favour from the emperor, and, with the few who adhered to him, fled to the woods and fastnesses of the country, there to await the course of events. The Huns were pressing forward, and Fritigern, with the bulk of the people, their wives, children and portable riches, stood on the other bank of the Danube, and urged their petition for refuge with the earnestness of despair.

Thrace was granted to them: how much it must have been desolated before such a grant could have been possible may be guessed: and the policy of Valens in placing a hardy and warlike people in that frontier province with an interest in defending it, was good, had he or his agents carried out the plan in the spirit of Christian brotherhood, so as to ensure the friendship of the people thus received: for the Goths, already Christian, and inclined to be an agricultural people, might have been useful colonists, and have strengthened and invigorated the decaying power of Rome. But the only part of Christianity which now remained among the mass of the people was a fierce attachment to its dogmata: its mild precepts and its more difficult self-government and moderation were forgotten; and the Goths, already driven from their homes by savage invaders, had to suffer from the extortion of the people inhabiting the country they traversed. Food was sold at the most extravagant prices, and the wretched fugitives, when they had nothing else to offer in exchange, were obliged to sell their children for the necessaries of life. This was not to be borne by a spirited and hitherto free people, with arms in their hands; for the emperor's or-

der, that they should pass the Danube unarmed, had been neglected by his officers; and a series of bloody engagements ensued, which ended in the slaughter of forty thousand of the best troops of the empire, with the emperor Valens himself, under the walls of Hadrianople.*

The chastisement was deserved, and it is well to record it; for we seldom, in the heat and turmoil of present events, sufficiently consider the great moral laws of the universe, which are never infringed with impunity. Had the ministers and subjects of Valens acted by the Christian rule which they acknowledged, and duly carried out the merciful orders of their sovereign, they might have secured to the empire a set of stout allies capable of defending the frontier, who, while receiving from their hosts the arts of civilization and peace, would have brought their rude simplicity, and constitutions unweakened by luxury, to season and strengthen the social system they entered. The Romans, on the contrary, sought merely to gratify a base covetousness, and in so doing forfeited all these advantages and brought on themselves a host of formidable invaders instead of useful friends.

* This fatal engagement took place Aug. 9, A. D. 378.

CHAPTER II.

Christian Doctrine and Practice,

from A.D. 325 to A.D. 379.

THE council which Constantinus Magnus had called, with the hope of ensuring the peace of the christian church, by definitively settling its doctrines, had bequeathed a legacy of everlasting dissension, by the unwise endeavour to define what human words can never express; and no sooner was the powerful influence of that great emperor withdrawn by his death, than the disputes which even he had been unable wholly to silence broke forth with double violence. As no satisfactory definition of the Divine Nature is possible, every attempt increased the confusion: fresh synods and fresh creeds failed to produce uniformity, and did but add to the already numerous shades of difference in faith, so subtile that they defy explanation. The doctrines of the early church seemed for a short time to rest in the hands of one man only; but the vigorous intellect and lucid style of Atha-

nasius did it full justice: where he was, none swerved from the faith of the early martyrs of the truth; where he was not, there was vacillation and uncertainty.

Hilarius, bishop of Poitiers, had the merit of seeing at last that the points on which they were disputing were incapable of a satisfactory definition; and in his treatise *De Trinitate*, which, with singular inconsistency he wrote to satisfy the church on questions which he considered improper to be mooted at all, he gives the wise advice that we should be content to worship the Infinite without expecting fully to comprehend it; or supposing that the terms we use can ever entirely express things so utterly beyond the reach of our senses. "For" says he, "we are not ignorant that neither the words of man, nor the comparison with human nature can ever suffice for the explanation of Divine things . . . . . Since what is spiritual is wholly diverse from any corporeal example. Yet when we speak of celestial natures, the conceptions of our mind must be expressed by the common phrases of our language . . . not because they are suitable to the dignity of God, but to the weakness of our intellect. Thus when we make use of human things by way of comparison and metaphor,

we do not think of God as measuring him by a corporeal nature, nor imagine the spiritual to be endued with our passions, but rather use visible symbols in some measure to express the Invisible to our understanding."* Thus, too, speaks Basilius, surnamed the Great; the chief defender of the Nicene doctrine in the East. After blaming the folly of those who fancied "the Father throned on high with the Son near him on a lower seat," he continues, "What can soften down the unblushing misrepresentation of Scripture, when the phrases 'Sit at my right hand' and 'he sits at the right hand of the majesty of God' are interpreted to mean a difference of power and place? For 'the right hand' does not mean any inferior place as they (the Areians) say, but a relation of equality; nor is 'the right hand' to be understood corporeally, for then God must also have a left hand, . . . but let them learn that Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the image of God the invisible, and the ray (απαυγασμα) of his glory, God having set his signet upon him and expressed himself wholly in him . . . Let no one, therefore, interpret so carnally and poorly

* Hilarii Op. lib. iv. 3.

the phrases 'right hand' and 'bosom' as if the great God could be circumscribed in any place, and might have a form, and place, and position: for this is very remote from the idea of the simple (i. e. without division of parts) and infinite and unbodied Deity." †

This is sound sense, and it is to be wished that controversialists of this and all subsequent times had paid more attention to this very self-evident proposition, instead of bewildering themselves with the endeavour to define in human phraseology — proh pudor! — the nature of the Creator of all! — to measure the Infinite by the finite!

Hilarius was one of the bishops banished by the emperor Constantius, for refusing to acquiesce in the unjust condemnation of Athanasius. Basilius, although his opinions were not those of his sovereign Valens, was allowed to retain his bishopric.

From the time that the empire became christian, we unfortunately lose our best guides as to the real doctrines of the church; for the writings of controversialists against heretics ill supply the calm expositions of the faith which were ad-

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* Basilii, lib. de Spiritu Sancto, c. vi.

dressed to their heathen persecutors by the early Christians. Henceforth some allowance must be made in reading the works intended to refute particular heresies, for a little straining of the truth, or a little exaggeration of doctrine, in the heat of controversy, if the writer happen to be of an irritable temperament. This will be seen more and more as we advance.

The doctrine of Manes, which was founded on the Magian tenet of two co-eternal principles,* began to gain many converts in this century among the oriental Christians. It was strongly opposed by many writers, especially by Titus, bishop of Bostra,† whose treatise on the subject is the longest and best written, for its tone is for the most part calm and philosophical: from this prelate, therefore, we may gather what were the opinions of the church at that time on some subjects which had not attracted much attention till Manes brought them forward, but which since that time have given rise to much controversy. The Manicheans believed that the material part of the universe was the seat of the

* i. e. good and evil. Manes was born about A.D. 240, and began to publish his doctrine when he was thirty-five; consequently about A.D. 275.

† He wrote about A.D. 360.

evil principle, and that therefore the body of man was irrecoverably corrupt: and they were accused sometimes, though, as it appears, unjustly, of abusing this doctrine to the purpose of extreme immorality, by considering the flesh as so essentially evil, that the attempt to purify it from its gross desires was utterly vain, and assuming that this being the case, the soul was not answerable for the excesses of the body; and need not concern itself about them. This, however, though a possible consequence of the doctrine, was far from being practically carried out by the sect in general: on the contrary, the notion of the entire and inherent corruption of the body led to a course of severe austerities, and an utter retreat from all social intercourse, in order that the soul might be left free to pursue its divine contemplations.

This notion of the inherent evil in human nature is combated with much sound argument by the bishop of Bostra, "A man who does wrong" says he, "is justly held guilty of sin, (i. e. according to our views) but this reproach would be unjust if he were to sin because he is unable to abstain from it: but if he have it in his power not to do a thing, and nevertheless does it, then he may properly be said to sin. And all actions

deserve the name of sin which are done against reason, for that is always at hand to be used at our need, if we choose to seek its aid: thus all that is done without the approbation of our reason is sin, even though nature should give the occasion; for reason is placed in us to judge of the things of nature, that we may not act ignorantly. Therefore if by the discipline of virtue we exercise the reason that is in us, the body becoming moderate in all its impulses, becomes also healthy and strong: if not, it is weak and blind . . . . It is in our power to use the reason that is in us, as those who are engaged in building take accurate bearings and measures . . . . . and we must cultivate it like seed thrown into the earth, which, if not cared for, perishes.

"And here arises a doubt why we should be thrown into so much peril by having it left to our choice whether we will use this diligence or not, and why we were not only not made at once perfectly good, but frequently find the evil not only useful, but apparently necessary, whence proceeds all sin. But if God had made us unable to sin, we could not be good; for a good man is he who is just and temperate: and it is only he who abstains from evil that is just, and he who flies from excess that is temperate. Thus by having the contrary in our power we

become virtuous . . . . Let us look at a young child . . . which is neither good nor evil, but whose nature is excellent, though as yet incapable of the goodness of virtue; as gold is in its nature excellent, though not yet drawn from the earth, and gems, though not yet polished: and thus we judge of the reason of man; it is excellent, very excellent in its nature and being, but the goodness of virtue is only acquired by labour. Hence God made him capable of the knowledge and practice of either good or evil. . . . . The nature of man, therefore, is excellent, as that of gold or gems, as being the work of God, but becomes *good* by having the power of doing evil . . . . It is clear, therefore, that it is a benefit to man that he is capable of doing evil, for it is by abstaining from it that he becomes worthy, and he is honoured by having this liberty conferred on him with a due knowledge of the nature of virtue and of vice. For God is good, not because he is ignorant of evil or unable to effect it, but because he loves goodness, for he is not good who has no power to do evil, but he who does not choose to use that power."*

* Titi Episc. Bost. adv. Manichæas, lib. ii. The same kind of argument is used by Serapion, an Egyptian bishop, about twenty years earlier.

It is evident from these extracts as well as from other writers on the same subject, which want of space will not allow me to quote, that the church in those days considered the doctrine of the natural corruption of man as an heretical error: and taught that he is *capable* of evil, but not evil in himself: and that his virtue consists in the not abusing his freedom by making use of that capability. The error of the Manichæans, however, took deep root, for it is pleasant to those who have misused their liberty to believe that their nature disabled them from doing otherwise: afterwards too, when the monstrous doctrine of superabundant merit was introduced, those who were disgusted by this departure from the truth, ran into the opposite extreme, and taught that man was utterly fallen and corrupt. Hence the accusation of Manichæism brought against the Waldenses and other protesting Christians of the middle ages who were the precursors of Luther and Calvin, and it is likely had some share in influencing their opinions in this respect.

Before science had taught man how to cope with the forces of nature and use its hidden resources for his own comfort, the sum of *apparent* evil in the world was such, that we can

hardly wonder that many should have doubted whether it could be the work of a benevolent Deity: hence the endeavour to get rid of the difficulty by supposing some evil being or principle independent of the good God: and the Manichæans seem to have embraced this error in order, as they thought, to justify His ways. The bishop of Bostra, deeply imbued with the philosophy of the Gospel, seems to have seen more clearly than his contemporaries that this heresy was the result of ignorance rather than perverseness, and set himself to clear away the difficulty in the only possible way, by showing that what are generally considered evils, are not so in themselves, and that a perverse will in man,—the only thing which can be called independent of the Deity,—is the only evil in the universe: for man having been made free in order to fit him for happiness, chooses badly, and inflicts ills on himself and others which the constitution of the world by no means renders necessary. The great ill which men are wont to complain of, "Death," says the bishop, "is not evil in its nature . . . for those who have the race of life to run, when they arrive at the goal receive death as a rest from exertion, for it is not a destruction of their being, but a change

according to the merits of each, which gives room for others, not yet in being, to run the same course . . . To him who regulates his life according to virtue death does not appear an evil, but he who loves sin, from the same folly which causes his excesses, fears death: for such folly has its proper punishment in this fear . . . but the just depart like victors to receive their crown."

Having disposed of this subject, he next takes up that of moral evil, and insists that "whatever is called evil of this kind is not an actually existing thing but a choice: for the name of devil does not signify a being (ουσιαν) but a will or choice; and Judas being a man, was called a devil by the Lord, not as being that by nature, but by will . . . . for he was chosen with the other disciples, on account of the virtue he then possessed, but was called a devil afterwards when he resolved on betraying his master. If then the name of devil be given to Judas on account of a voluntary action, so it is clear that when applied to others it signifies the doing a voluntary action . . . For we call an accuser, διαβολος, i. e. devil, . . . and since the devil is an accuser of God to man and man to God, and men to one another, this title is applied to him:

and if the name of Satan be also given, let it be remembered that this word also in Hebrew signifies what we render by *αντικειμενος*, i. e. an adversary, namely an enemy by choice . . . . and as we use *good will* and *benevolence* to signify voluntary kindness, so, i. e. in a voluntary sense, we use *διαβολος*, Devil, Satan, and, Evil. As also in the gospel, the Saviour among other things teaches his disciples to pray, saying, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." In this philosophic view of the subject the bishop of Bostra differs in some degree from the writers of the preceding centuries, who, bringing with them into the church somewhat of their pagan belief, imagined the deities of the heathen to be actually devils exercising a considerable spiritual power, though curbed by the coming of Christ upon earth. Thus when the emperor Julianus wished to be initiated into certain heathen mysteries, the whole business is said to have been impeded by his inadvertently making the sign of the cross; and this is triumphantly recorded by the christian writers of the time, as a proof of the power of Christ over evil spirits, rather than as an instance of cunning on the part of the mystagogue. The errors of Manes compelled those who wished to refute

them, to a revision of this vulgar belief; and it was then at once seen that much of it was a mere superstition, since it is incompatible with the attributes of the Deity, either that there should be any eternal principle independent of him, or that he should have allowed any created being to exercise a power over man trenching on the divine. The above extract gives us the opinion of a calm examiner of the popular notion: but it was only in minds capable of close reasoning, probably, that it had much weight, for we find the belief in evil spirits gaining strength as learning decayed, and enthusiasm took its place, and the legends of subsequent times are full of imaginary conflicts with devils, often of so ludicrous a nature that we can hardly conceive the state of a mind in which such tales could be gravely received.

It has been already noticed that the persecutions to which the Christians were exposed in the reigns of Decius and Diocletianus had caused many to fly to desert places for security; and when the cause for their retreat ceased, many had become so far accustomed to the life they led there, that they were little inclined to return to the common haunts of man. These persons who had so resolutely adhered to the faith of

Christ during the time when it was only to be done at the hazard of life, were the objects of enthusiastic admiration to the succeeding generation, and what had at first been merely a selection of the least of two evils, came at last to be regarded as a choice of that good part which could not be taken away from them: the anchorite life was honoured as something especially holy; and the hardships which, in the first instance, were involuntary, soon grew to be thought meritorious in themselves.

Excepting in the most brutal barbarism, man has never so far lost sight of his high destiny as to forget that he is endued with powers which might be better used than they are: some twinges of remorse there will be for misapplied talents and wasted time; and then the spiritual shelters its own fault behind the animal nature, and imputes to its grosser desires and appetites the various wrongs perpetrated by men. Hereupon follows the thought that if *the* animal nature be the cause of transgression, it should be mortified and subdued; and this is the foundation of all the ancient oriental philosophy, which held the body to be a mere clog to the soul and wholly unworthy its attention. When Christianity spread over the countries where this had been the re-

ceived doctrine of the greatest sages, the temperance, purity, and moderation in all things which its Great Founder had taught, seemed to coincide so well with those previous lessons, that it was not wonderful if, in the hands of many, the two became totally amalgamated; and thus the asceticism of the Hindu Gymnosophist or Fakir, was grafted, as it were, on the more rational doctrine of Christ. It is always easier in fact, and more difficult in appearance to mortify the body than to control the spirit; and thus outward observances and mortifications have the double recommendation of winning more of the admiration of men, and requiring less of that laborious self-government which, however easy in the end when habits are formed, is at first so difficult to the untrained mind, that almost any bodily suffering is preferable to the unceasing toil it imposes. It is easier to forego the delicacies of food and raiment than to bear wrongs patiently, subdue angry passions, and make our motives at all times such as a holy God can be supposed to contemplate with satisfaction. But can the faults of the spirit be expiated by the sufferings of the body? Reason and Scripture say, NO—but man still clings to the hope that he may thus strike a balance of his account, and

from the time when the priests of Baal gashed themselves with knives in order to propitiate their deity, and Gymnosophists burnt themselves alive to show themselves superior to earthly feelings, down to the present day, whatever is painful or wearisome to the body has been held to be wholesome for the soul, in defiance of Christ's express declaration that none of these things are available without that purification of the heart and will which can alone fit us for spiritual happiness.

It was thus with the christians of the time we are now treating of: whilst the precepts of their Lord were always present to them, and their lives were regulated accordingly, little value was attached to ceremonies; and the purification and government of the will in conformity to his, was the one thing which occupied their thoughts: but when zeal grew hot and love grew cool, the feeling that all was not right, again arose; and then the old plan of the unregenerate man, to set bodily mortification against mental wrong, and flog the body for the sins of the soul, gained more and more followers. Anchorites multiplied in the deserts and the mountains, and religious communities who renounced all the usual avocations of the world, in order, as they said, 'to

serve God,' sprang up on all sides. Did they serve God? *—The question can hardly be answered without some consideration of the book of God's works as well as that of His Word.

It has been his will to place a race of intellectual beings in a world where the forces of inanimate nature and the inroads of the brute creation are only to be controlled or rendered innocuous by the exercise of that faculty which has been bestowed on man alone of all the denizens of earth, namely reason. Without this he is

* These observations are not uncalled for in the present times, when there has been so prevalent a disposition to attach undue value to gross and material observances. Ladies whose station in life *might* enable them to arrive at a point of mental cultivation which would make them the guides and purifiers of society, think they do well when they embrace the duties of Sisters of Charity, wear coarse clothes, and scour their own rooms. If they are incapable of doing anything better, and occupy themselves thus rather than do nothing,—good:—they have the merit of preferring some employment, however mean, to none at all; but let them not fancy that they are thus fulfilling a christian duty. Those who wilfully shrink from the duties of the state in which God has placed them, cast away its advantages, and leave their minds to lie waste merely to harden their hands with a scrubbing brush,—who think to serve God by wearying the body, and perhaps injuring the health in doing what, if all did, they would deprive many of

nearly defenceless; with it he is able to subdue even the elements, so as to lessen labour, and improve the condition of the race to a point which the imagination has hardly yet reached. We cannot suppose the Deity to have given so noble a faculty for no purpose; and therefore, even if the parable of the talents had never been spoken, we might have judged that we should not be free from blame if we neglected to use so great a gift: and even if the ill effects of conventual life had never been seen, we might have

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bread who have only their strong arms and well exercised limbs to maintain them,—are bad scholars of Christ. Their talent must be used, and whoever in higher station prætermits any of its duties, is answerable before God for what he HAS NOT DONE. The few must lead the many: and whilst there are rich and poor, it is the duty of the rich by diligent mental culture to make themselves capable of leading well. Women are right if they bethink themselves that they were not sent into the world merely to dance and sing while they are young, and stitch chair covers and slippers as they grow old; but they are wrong if they think that they have done all when they renounce these vanities, and perform the duties of a nurse or a housemaid. Let them rather, when this thought occurs, consider what is God's intention in placing them in the rank they occupy. The old trite saying that "knowledge is power" might teach them: —let them gain that, and there would then be no room for the question, "Can women regenerate society?—"

judged that to withdraw from the active duties of society merely to rise in the night to pray and sing psalms, could scarcely be deemed an acceptable service to God. When a retreat from mankind was no longer adopted as a refuge from persecution, the life of the anchorite was a folly, and the vows of conventual life no less so. The laws of nature must be the laws of the Creator of nature, therefore it cannot be by contravening any of these known laws that we shall arrive at perfection; on the contrary, it is quite clear that as the species could not exist but in society, so the perfectionising of all the domestic relations so as to make them the safeguards of virtue, is the true service of God. Accordingly, we shall find that this main mistake as to what that service was, soon vitiated the whole of the christian community. Man is, in fact, so formed for society, that his physical powers are crushed under the deprivation of it; the brain becomes disordered, and many of those who were celebrated as saints in those times, would have been considered as fit tenants of a lunatic asylum in modern Europe.*

* The experiment of solitary confinement has been repeatedly tried in modern times, but always with the effect of disordering or hebetizing the intellect.

The first anchorite whose name is recorded is one Paulus, an Egyptian of the lower Thebais, whose life has been written by Hieronymus, or as he is more commonly called, Saint Jerome. He retired when quite a youth from the persecution of Decius, and remained hidden in a wild and mountainous region to a very advanced age. By degrees the wilds within reach of Egypt became peopled with those who fled from persecution, especially that under Diocletianus, which was very severe in that country, and the over-excited minds of these natives of a southern climate soon saw miracles in the most common occurrences. Dreams of no unordinary kind were magnified into Divine visitations, or temptations of the Evil one, and these eremites lived in a supernatural state of things.

Antonius, more generally known as St. Anthony, was another of this class. He was somewhat younger than Paulus, and having dreamed that there was somewhere an anchorite more perfect in self-mortification than himself, he set out to seek him. Many were the miraculous interpositions which led him on his road, according to the account given us by Jerome, and he finally reached the object of his search, which turned out to be Paulus, time enough to give

burial to his body at his death, which took place soon after the arrival of his aged disciple. The old man had lived in such perfect seclusion, that though this was in the reign of the son of Constantinus Magnus, he had not yet heard of the change in the religion of the empire. Athanasius has written a life of St. Anthony, in which his various miraculous temptations and triumphs over them are recorded. It is difficult to understand how a man of such unusually clear intellect as the bishop of Alexandria should record such puerilities, it being quite evident that they were but the hallucinations of a disordered brain. Perhaps the present very common notion of the eastern nations, that idiots and persons quietly insane were holy men, favoured especially by God, might have prevailed in Egypt also in those times, and strengthened the notion of the saintship of these harmless enthusiasts: if so, even the great mind of Athanasius might not be able wholly to rise above the prejudices of his youth. It is hardly possible otherwise to account for his grave biography of St. Anthony, if indeed it be his production, which some have doubted.

The anchorite life having been found full of difficulties, and the persecution still continuing, it was thought better, by some, to join together in small companies, and assist one another in

procuring the common necessaries of life: and this led to the establishment of monasteries. Of course where many persons are to live together, some rules would become necessary, and some one of the number would be selected to conduct the affairs of the society. The person who had contributed chiefly to the formation of the community was therefore recognised as its head, and his rules were afterwards held to be binding on all who entered it. Hilarion, who retired to the desert A.D. 306 at the age of fifteen, seems to have been the first to establish a community of this kind, though some give the honour to Pachomius, whose conversion to Christianity took place about A.D. 314, and whose monastic rules have been transmitted to us, though probably with some additions and alterations by those who succeeded him; for these rules are first found in the writings of Jerome sixty or seventy years after the death of Pachomius, which took place A.D. 340; and there is a puerility about some of them which by no means belongs to the age when the professors of Christianity, if ever, must have been serious, earnest men.*

* It was not till A.D. 311 that the victory of Constantinus Magnus over Maxentius a little stayed the fury of persecution in the West. Elsewhere it was carried on with much bitterness.

The fashion being once set, conventual establishments increased rapidly.† In A.D. 356 they were numerous enough in the Thebais to afford shelter to Athanasius when flying from the anger of the emperor Constantius; and when Valens, either at the instigation of his Areian counsellors, or because he thought such persons useless

† A few instances, culled from those recorded with high praise by Socrates the historian of that period, may serve to show how great a departure from the simplicity of the Gospel was already in progress. Ammon, one of the earliest of the Egyptian monks, is said never to have seen his body uncovered, and having once to pass a river, and dreading lest in doing so he should be compelled to a piece of involuntary cleanliness, prayed to God that he might not be reduced to that extremity: whereupon an angel was sent to carry him over!—Didymus, another monk, lived ninety years, and during that time is said never to have spoken to any human creature.—Macarius is reported to have said to a person who visited him, and who being weary and thirsty requested a draught of water, "Be content with the shade; for many travel by land and sea who have not that"—and to have added, "for twenty years I have never taken my fill of either bread, water, or sleep; for I ate by weight and drank by measure, and slept few hours; for it was my custom to lean against a wall, and so take a nap."—If such a course as this were needful to our salvation, and many were to choose it,—which all ought to do if it be indeed the best—pestilence must follow from lack of cleanliness; and famine from the lack of strength to till the earth.

citizens, insisted on enlisting the young and able bodied monks in the imperial army, they were so numerous, that a military detachment of three thousand men was thought requisite to compel obedience; the monks at that time numbering five thousand. Convents of nuns also became numerous, and during the period we are considering spread over the greater part of the empire; and this perhaps had its rise as much in the circumstances as the superstition of the time; for the distracted state of the country from civil and religious dissensions as well as barbarian inroads, might drive many young females to seek a safer asylum than their homes afforded, even without any extravagant opinion of the superior holiness of such a life.

The austerities which were now beginning to be thought a part of Christian duty soon produced the reaction which generally follows any unnatural course of life, as we may gather from a decree of Valentinianus, dated A. D. 370, and published in all the churches in Rome, denouncing the malpractices of ecclesiastics, and "those who call themselves continent," forbidding them, on pain of capital punishment, to enter the houses of widows or unmarried women, or to receive money from them under

pretext of religion.* The falling off from the purity of christian life must have been great to make so severe a law necessary. The conduct of Damasus, bishop of Rome, also seems to have brought scandal on the christian name by its violence, no less than by the luxury he indulged in. Both he and one Ursinus had been candidates for that bishopric, and so unseemly a conflict had arisen when the election was to be made, that the partisans of the rival candidates came to blows, and an hundred and thirty-seven bodies were left dead in the church, besides wounded. Damasus prevailed. "I do not deny," says the heathen historian who records the fact, "that, considering the luxury of the city, the prize was worth contending for, since the successful candidate was certain that he should be enriched by the donations of matrons; that he should be conveyed through the streets in a carriage, clothed in elegant vestments; and finally, sit down to a feast surpassing in splendour those of the emperor himself:"† and he contrasts this unbecoming luxury with the simple habits of the provincial bishops in

* Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. Tit. ii. 20.

† Amm. l. xxvii. c. 3.

terms which are justified by the above-mentioned decree of the christian emperor: for no one can suppose that Valentinianus, who forfeited his military rank and power for the sake of his faith, would have issued such a decree causelessly.

The belief in miraculous interferences on the most trivial occasions was favoured by the decay of learning and the enthusiastic asceticism which now took the place of the less conspicuous virtues of social life which Christ had inculcated. The saint in his desert home found the wild animals no longer startled by the sight of a person who seemed almost one of themselves, and perhaps deemed it a special interference of Providence in his behalf: at any rate, those who occasionally visited him to ask his prayers, thought it so; and we find almost ludicrous instances of this kind gravely recorded by the writers of the time. Jerome, in his life of Paulus the anchorite, written only in the next century, tells of a *centaur!* who guided Antonius on his road to the habitation of this holy man; and tells it so seriously, that we must believe him to have received the tale on what he deemed sufficient authority. Antonius too, is said to have seen the ascent of Ammon, the monk before mentioned, into heaven! Whatever writer

we take up from this time, we find such abundance of these miraculous events on occasions so little worthy of such a divine interference, that we can only suppose them to arise from the self-deception of enthusiasm, or the wilful fraud of some who thought all *means* permitted provided the *end* were good, or at least appeared so to them.

Though Valens in the east, in the latter part of his reign, suffered the Areian faction to persecute the orthodox in his dominions with a cruelty which we must hope the emperor himself was ignorant of; Valentinianus in the west,—though he granted toleration to all, heathen as well as Christian,—remained himself firmly attached to the Catholic faith, as set forth by the great council of Nikæa; and the see of Milan falling vacant about this time,* by the death of the Areian bishop Auxentius, the emperor called together the other bishops, and bade them choose a fitting person for the office. The bishops, on the other hand, begged the emperor, in whose wisdom and piety they had full confidence, to choose for them; which he in his turn declining, the people grew impatient of the delay, and proceeding to the election, a collision

* A. D. 374.

between the orthodox and the Areian party became imminent. Hereupon Ambrosius, the governor of the province, hastened to the church to quiet the sedition: the dispute ceased on his appearance, and the whole multitude came to the unexpected decision of electing him for their bishop. He had not even been baptized at this time, but the emperor, on hearing the choice which the people had made, ratified it with pleasure, was present at his baptism and ordination, and congratulated the church on having chosen a man in whose ability and integrity he had the highest confidence. The new bishop, a man in the prime of life,* carried with him to his high office all the courage, and some of the haughtiness of the quondam general. Few names are more famous in the annals of the church than his, though he was not altogether above the errors of his time: indeed that was hardly to be expected from a man whose christian training up to that time had been so imperfect that he was still a catechumen, but his firm character won the respect of all, even the greatest, and no one ever filled the office with more credit.

* He was born A. D. 340, consequently was thirty-four at his election.

CHAPTER III.

From the Accession of Theodosius Magnus, A.D. 379, to the Capture of Rome by Alaric, A.D. 410.

THE victorious Goths having now no opposing army to dread, and finding that the wealth they had expected to win from the plunder of their vanquished enemies was secured within the walls of Hadrianople, attempted the siege of this place; but here their rude valour was no match for the military art of the Romans; and after various abortive attempts, their general called off his troops,* and spreading desolation as he went, approached Constantinople. Here, however, the walls were again a hindrance, and a sally made by a party of Saracens which

* "I have made peace with stone walls," observed the Goth, with a haughty contempt for those who sheltered themselves behind them, that showed a spirit which would soon find means to break that compelled peace. The men who could hold the country without the walls, had no great reason to fear those within them.

had been engaged in the service of Valens, so far alarmed the Gothic warriors, by the appearance of a yet more barbarous people, mounted on horses of greater speed than their own,* that they withdrew, after plundering the suburbs, and spread themselves over the open country as far as the confines of Italy.

When the Gothic nation first crossed the Danube, the emperor had required that the children of all the principal persons should be put into his hands as hostages; and these boys had been distributed among the different towns of the east, there to be educated in the arts of civilisation, so as to fit the future chiefs of the people, now admitted within the boundaries of the empire, for a life of peace in their new country. The plan was a wise one, had the treatment of the Goths been of the same kind always: but when the wrongs first, and afterwards the triumphant revenge of their nation, became known to these youths, the danger and difficulty of retaining them in their honourable captivity became great. To obviate this, a measure was adopted equally at variance with sound policy, christian feeling, and humanity. The

* Amm. lxxxi. c. 16. § 2.

senate of Constantinople sent secret orders to the governors of the cities where the Gothic youths were placed, enjoining them, on a certain day, to massacre them all!—the orders were obeyed:—and this horrible and cowardly slaughter was praised as *prudent!* But even that poor praise can hardly be accorded if we ask our own hearts how the chiefs of the Goths must have felt when they heard the news?—Would not hundreds of victims be sacrificed, in the course of their victorious career, to the fierce revenge of the bereaved parents? Had the army of Alaric forgotten it? The empire might be nominally christian, but where men could be found in sufficient numbers to plan and execute such an act, it is evident that that humane faith had but little hold on men's minds. The fashionable converts who embraced the religion of the court, had but changed the ceremonies of their worship; their vices were the same, their hearts uninfluenced.

The emperor Gratianus, who was hastening to the assistance of his uncle Valens, was arrested in his march by the news of the fatal defeat of the eastern army under the walls of Hadrianople: to make head against the victorious barbarians, with his present force, was impossible; and his own presence was required in

Gaul: after a short deliberation, therefore, he determined on taking a colleague whose talent might be sufficient to cope with the danger. Theodosius, afterwards surnamed the Great, was the son of that Theodosius whose skill and loyalty had rescued Africa and Britain from the hands of rebels, but who, as the meed of these great services, had suffered death under a false accusation too hastily credited by the court. The son had obtained leave to retire to his estates in Spain, and there, during the three years which had elapsed since his father's death, he had spent his time in the quiet pursuits of the country. His farms and his library formed his occupation and his amusement. The messengers of Gratianus found him there and summoned him, like Cincinnatus, to quit the plough in order to save the empire. The patriot, and I may add, the Christian warrior, forgot his wrongs, cared little for the danger, and obeyed the call. He had learned the art of war under his illustrious father, and had already distinguished himself in command: he was in the flower of his age, handsome in person, virtuous in his life, and endowed with every quality calculated to win the admiration of the soldiery and the people. The choice was a wise one,

and his subsequent reign more than justified the expectations formed from his early career.

The capacious mind of this great man seems at once to have comprehended the advantages which his predecessor had thrown away; and his Christian feeling led him to do justice to a people so cruelly goaded into hostilities. Instead, therefore, of endeavouring to exterminate the nation in a general engagement, for which his dispirited and weakened army was wholly unfitted, he contented himself with keeping the Goths in check, and, by constant vigilance, preventing further ravages; and thus he quietly bided his time till favourable circumstances might enable him to convert them, from formidable enemies, into peaceful neighbours or useful friends. The death of their leader, Fritigern, offered this occasion: dissentions arose among the different tribes which had fought under his banner; some were gained over by the promises of Theodosius, and entered his service, and the rest submitted to Athanaric, their former chief, who, on the invasion of the Huns, had withdrawn to the forest; but now again appeared among his people. With him Theodosius entered into a treaty of peace, invited him to visit Constantinople, received him with regal

splendour and courtesy, and won so far upon the affections of his wild guest, that the aged Goth, delighted with his reception, and astonished at the grandeur of the city, exclaimed that "the emperor doubtless was a god upon earth, and that whoever attempted to oppose him deserved the fall he would suffer." *

The Gothic king was taken ill shortly after, and died at Constantinople; but such was the confidence placed in the honour of their imperial host, that this event caused no apprehension to the nation; and Theodosius having celebrated the obsequies of the deceased with royal magnificence, the whole army of the Visigoths, won by his sympathy in their grief, at once enlisted in his service. Very soon after, the smaller tribes made their submission; so that in little more than four years from the time that the injustice of Valens or his subjects towards the people who sought their protection, had brought the empire nearly to ruin, the same semi-civilized tribes, won by a more generous treatment, became the strength of the Roman armies: a triumph far greater and far nobler than the bloodiest victory could have afforded. The As-

* v. Jornandes.

trogoths appear to have retreated to the North, from whence they returned about four years after, recruited by the more barbarous tribes of that region; but they were nearly exterminated by the Roman generals, whilst endeavouring to cross the Danube: the remainder were allowed to settle in Phrygia and Lydia, as were the Visigoths in Thracia. There they formed a polity of their own, under the government of their native chiefs and laws, and were no otherwise subjected to Rome than by an engagement to supply an army of forty thousand men for the service of the emperor. The new colonists were also supplied with corn for seed, and immediate sustenance, as well as excused from the payment of any imperial taxes for some years. Had the liberal policy of Theodosius been pursued by his successors, these colonies would probably have become, what he sought to make them, the bulwarks of the empire against the yet wilder tribes who were pressing in upon it from all sides: as it was, they learned the arts and discipline of war under him, only to become more formidable enemies, when provoked into hostilities by the folly and ill faith of succeeding rulers.

Scarcely had the emperor of the east succeeded in delivering his country from the danger

of the Gothic war, than fresh internal dissentions arose. An usurper seized on Britain and Gaul, and the troops of Gratianus, provoked at the favour he had shown to a favourite band of Alani in his service, forsook him, and joined the rebels. He escaped with a few hundreds only of faithful followers, was pursued and put to death.

Gratianus was not the first emperor who had been sacrificed to the jealousy with which the Roman legionaries regarded the German and other foreign and semi-barbarous auxiliaries: and though we hear only of the death of the sovereign, it is not likely that his favourite guards wholly escaped from outrage. Thus the ill will grew; and though these half disciplined nations were as yet unable to cope with Roman tactics, it became daily more apparent that this disadvantage would not long counterbalance the hardy courage which made them dare the contest, and learn, even from defeats, the arts which subdued them.

After the death of Gratianus, the remains of the western empire fell to the share of his young brother Valentinianus; and Ambrosius, bishop of Milan, whose former life had well fitted him for the charge, was twice sent to negociate with

the usurper Maximus, who had been so far successful in his enterprize as to be acknowledged by Theodosius as a sharer in the empire. It is not wonderful that, on such an occasion, the early character and habits of the man should influence his deportment: the embassy of Ambrosius was marked by the skill and boldness of the politician and the soldier, and he returned successful: but the tone he had assumed towards the *de facto* sovereign of Gaul and Britain, in his very council chamber,* formed a bad

* The account of the interview is given by Ambrosius himself, in a letter to the young emperor, which is still preserved. It is too characteristic to be passed over. "The day after my arrival at Treves," says he, "I went to the palace: a chamberlain received me, from whom I enquired if I might be allowed an audience? He asked if I had credentials? I replied I had. He said I could not be received excepting in the public council chamber. I answered that this was not the sacerdotal mode of conference: that I had to speak seriously of many things. . . . . When Maximus was seated in the council I entered: he rose to give me the kiss of peace: I remained where I was. Those about me exhorted me to approach him, and he himself called me. I answered, 'Why do you offer to kiss him whom you have not acknowledged, for if you had acknowledged my office you would not have seen me in this place.' 'You are angry, bishop,' said he. 'Not at the wrong done me,' I replied, 'but I am ashamed of standing in a place not mine.' 'But

precedent for future times, and was copied afterwards by ecclesiastics on less worthy occasions.

It was about two years after his first mission and soon after his return from the second, that Ambrosius was called upon by the empress Justina, who ruled in her son's name, to give up

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on your first mission you came into the council chamber.' 'That was not my fault; the fault lay with him who called, not with him who entered.' 'But why then did you enter at all?' 'Because then I came as an inferior, asking peace, but now I appear as an equal.' 'Who bestowed this equality on you?' asked he. 'Almighty God, who has preserved the kingdom to Valentinianus.'" . . . . On this it seems Maximus lost patience, and broke out into angry expressions, boasting that he had had it in his power to seize the empire. "To this I calmly replied, 'There is no need of anger here . . . . rather listen patiently to what I shall relate to your council. I am come because you have said that in my late mission I deceived you. Even this I should be proud of doing for the good of my young emperor . . . . but why, when I first met your legions, did you not overrun Italy? What obstacles, what weapons, what troops did I oppose to you? Did I close the passes of the Alps with my single body? Would God I could have done it; but did you not send Count Victor to meet me at Mentz and ask for peace?'" . . . . He then goes on to relate how he reproached Maximus with the murder of Gratianus in no measured terms:—"'Look,'" continued the intrepid bishop, "'on him who now sits at your right hand (the brother of Maximus) whom Valentinianus, when

one of the churches of Milan for the use of the Areians, since she and the young emperor professed that faith: but she had miscalculated her power, and mistaken the character of the man, who served his God with the loyalty of a soldier rather than the meekness of a Christian.* He

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he might have revenged his own wrong on him, honourably sent back to you. . . . Weigh the two facts yourself. . . . He sent back your living brother; you have refused him even the corpse of his.' . . . Afterwards, when he found that I abstained from all communication with his bishops . . . he ordered me to go back without delay, which I did willingly, though many told me I should hardly escape in safety; but I performed my journey without impediment."

When a sovereign, however guilty, *could* be thus bearded in his council chamber with impunity, the spiritual had already mastered the temporal power, though perhaps the moment of the triumph was a little hastened by the character of the man. His own haughty nature, as well as the incipient pretensions of the sacerdotal order, are well illustrated by an anecdote related by his biographer Paulinus. "When, being yet a youth, he saw the hand of a priest kissed by his servants, his sister, or his mother, he held out his own, and said that they ought to do the same by him." The good notary thinks that this was a presage of his future episcopal dignity; it was rather a proof of a high spirit, with very little of superstitious devotion."

* It is difficult to figure to the imagination a period so differing, in all things, from the present age, and this often leads to a misunderstanding both of the actors and

refused the request of the empress;—he withstood the command of the emperor;—the people, to relieve whose wants he had devoted not only his own ample fortune, but the rich ornaments and vessels of the church, adored him;—the soldiery were awed by his lofty bearing, and

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the circumstances of former times: but let the reader for a moment suppose that the bishop of London was to be elected by the people assembled in St. Paul's;—that this election became very stormy, and that bloodshed being apprehended, the then Sir Arthur Wellesley having the command there, sallied from the Tower with a detachment of the military to restore order: — that on his appearance in the church the people had instantly acclaimed him bishop; that the case being referred to the king, the appointment had been confirmed in the most flattering terms;—and thus the future victor of Waterloo had brought with him all his talent, his energy, his diplomatic skill, and his military recollections and training, to the business of the episcopate. We may then perhaps understand the character of Ambrosius.

Once more the soldier-bishop shall tell his own tale. The letter is addressed to his sister.—"It is not now the Portian church" (that at the gate) "that is demanded, but the cathedral itself. . . . I was first called before the council and required to give up the cathedral, and requested at the same time to take care that the people made no disturbance on the occasion. I said that priests were not allowed to give up the temple of God. This was decided by acclamation in the church the following day. The præfect came and endeavoured to persuade us to give up the point: the people loudly refused, and

would not act against the gallant man who stood unarmed, yet fearless, before them; and again the imperial power quailed before the ecclesiastical. The empress yielded the point.

Meanwhile Theodosius in the east was anxi-

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the præfect went away, saying he should report it to the emperor. The following day was Sunday . . . I learnt that persons had been sent from the palace to prepare the royal seat in the Portian church . . . and that part of the populace had flocked thither . . . I began the service. Whilst I was yet engaged in it, I was told that the people had seized upon an Areian priest and were maltreating him. . . I prayed earnestly for God's aid that the guilt of blood might not be upon us, and sending some priests and deacons to the spot the man was rescued. Hereupon heavy penalties were inflicted, and first on the body of merchants . . . two hundred pounds of gold are required to be paid in three days: they reply they would give twice as much for their faith . . . the prisons are filled with them . . . persons of rank are threatened unless the cathedral be given up. . . I was called before the council . . and they said that the emperor only exercised his rightful power in demanding what belonged to him: all being his. I replied if he asks . . my property let him take it . . albeit that belongs to the poor . . . my body?—I am here—Will you throw me into chains,—will you condemn me to death?—I shall find pleasure in it. I shall not fly to the altar to save my life, but much rather sacrifice my life for the altar . . . But I was horror struck when I saw the cathedral occupied by armed men, fearing that there would be bloodshed, which I detest . . . I offered my own throat to their weapons. The tribunes of the Goths

ously endeavouring to re-establish the power and improve the condition of the empire. It had already been sufficiently seen that a people divided on the subject of religion can hardly be held within bounds: repeated seditions, and con-

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were there" (the Goths were of the Areian faith). "I addressed them sharply, and asked them if Rome had received them merely to minister to public disturbances, and whither they would go if this country were destroyed?—It was demanded of me that I should quiet the people. I said that all I could do was not to excite them—the rest was in the hands of God. If they thought me guilty they might take my life, or send me whither they would. On hearing this they departed, and I remained in the church all day; at night I went home . . the next day before it was light I found the church occupied by soldiers; and it was said that they had signified to the emperor that . . . if he agreed with the Catholics they would still serve him—if not they should go over to the party of Ambrosius . . . The church resounded with the lamentations of the people, and while reading the lessons it was notified to me that the new cathedral was also full of people, who called for a reader. To be brief, the very soldiers who seemed to occupy the church, when they knew that I had ordered them to abstain from communion, began to join us. This alarmed the women" (the empress and her attendants) "and they hastily departed; and the soldiers themselves, instead of speaking of violence, joined in prayer." When the soldiers were won all was won, and shortly after the merchants' fine was remitted, and a complete amnesty granted to the great joy of both people and soldiery.

sequent military execution had filled the largest cities of the empire with slaughter and misery, and the emperor, like Constantinus Magnus, thought that the best remedy was, to compel the minority to yield to the majority in this as well as other cases. One of his first cares therefore was to establish uniformity of worship: this, however, was effected by degrees and with exceeding prudence. According to the frequent custom of that age, the emperor, though born of Christian parents, had not received baptism at the time of his accession to power, but during a sickness which attacked him shortly after he received that initiation from the hands of an orthodox bishop, and shortly afterwards published an edict, requiring his subjects to conform to the same faith, as set forth by Damasus bishop of Rome, and Peter bishop of Alexandria.* The Areian bishops were removed, but without harshness, and so skilfully were the measures concerted, that the change was effected without the least tumult or difficulty.

The next great measure to be accomplished was the total subversion of the ancient polytheism, and this was effected by a succession of

* Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. Tit. 1. leg. 2. the edict was published A. D. 380.

edicts, limiting more and more the practice of the former superstitions. The first A. D. 381, prohibits sacrifices either by day or night. "God is to be worshipped by the prayers of a pure mind, not by profane hymns"—but no penalty is mentioned. A. D. 385, the prohibition of sacrifices and divination is repeated with the threat of a penalty; and A. D. 391, a fine of fifteen pounds of gold is imposed on all convicted of making unlawful sacrifices.* The temples were appropriated to other purposes, or, as not unfrequently happened, pulled down by the unmeasured zeal of the Christian population, led on by some favourite saint or bishop; and at Alexandria a serious insurrection took place in consequence of the attack of the bishop upon the temple of Serapiso. The remaining heathen population, provoked by the public exhibition in the market place, of the obscene emblems found in the temple,† flew to arms, and before any

* Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. Tit. 10. l. 7, 9, 10.

† It is a curious instance of the coarse manners of the times engendered by the practices of polytheism, that even after Christianity had been professed in the empire for above a century, with the short exception of the reign of Julianus, a Christian bishop should think it either wise or decent to expose such things to the public gaze, or that the people should have suffered it.

measures of defence could be taken, murdered and otherwise maltreated a great number of Christians: but this was the last effort of a party now reduced to a very small minority.

The unwilling alliance between Theodosius and Maximus lasted no longer than till this last was in a condition to hope for success in a struggle for the empire. By a stratagem he gained possession of the passes of the Alps, and the empress Justina, with the young Valentinianus, fled to the powerful emperor of the east for protection. Theodosius undertook their cause, Maximus was defeated, and the whole empire once more submitted to a single sovereign. With a rare moderation, however, he again put the western empire undiminished into the hands of the young Valentinianus, merely stipulating that in return for his effectual aid, the Catholic faith should be established in the western no less than the eastern empire.

While Theodosius had still the sole power in his hands he visited Rome, and himself put the question in the senate, whether Jupiter or Christ should thenceforward receive the worship of the Roman people. A debate in the presence of a victorious emperor was not likely to be either long or doubtful in its result: the majority voted

for the religion of the sovereign; many patrician families at once received baptism,* and t hence-

* The fashionable conversions which took place whenever the emperor was himself a conscientious Christian, have already been noticed, and now, when a fresh batch of these obsequious converts entered the church, it may be well to know what materials it consisted of. Let Ammianus, a heathen himself, paint the manners which had been engendered by the habits of vicious indulgence, which polytheism not only permitted but justified. He is writing of the period just preceding the accession of Theodosius. "Things had grown to such a point," observes he, "that all the lustrations of Epimenides would have been insufficient to purify the city, so corrupt is it. To begin with the nobility; I will give a glance at the people afterwards. They have a puerile delight in assuming sounding names . . . . appear in silken robes . . followed by cohorts of slaves, as if they were leading an army . . . They enter the baths, attended by at least fifty of their servants, call about them with a menacing air . . . but should they see there any of the vile persons who make it their business to minister to their infamous pleasures, they kiss and embrace them with disgusting fondness . . . to others they offer a knee or a hand to kiss, and think that favour sufficient to make them happy for life . . . Their houses are filled with babbling flatterers, who admire and praise every thing they see,—the columns of the lofty *façade*, the costly marbles which encrust the walls . . . In their feasts they have scales ready to weigh the fish and game if it be of extraordinary size . . and the unheard of weight is commented on and admired . . while the notaries in attend-

forward the very few rites of polytheism which could be observed were confined mainly to the

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ance take note of it. . . Detesting learning like poison, they read only Juvenal and Marcius Maximus . . their profound idleness avoids all other books—*why* they choose these it is not for my small judgment to decide. . . . Let a slave be late in bringing warm water, he is sentenced at once to 300 lashes; but if he have slain a man, and a complaint of the crime is preferred to the master, he exclaims, 'Has he indeed? . . well, if he does so any more he shall be corrected.' . . . If they resolve to visit their farms, if they attend a hunting match in which all the toil is borne by others, or if they make a voyage along shore to Puteoli or Caieta, especially if it should be a cloudy day, they consider themselves equal to Alexander or Cæsar; but if a fly should find its way through any fissure in the silken and gilded fans, or if a single ray should enter through an opening in the awning, they lament their fate. . . . When such a one leaves the bath, after wiping himself with the finest of linen, he diligently selects from the store of clothing which is carried with him, and which would suffice for a dozen people, the most splendid dress, and . . . taking from his servant the rings which he had taken off, lest they should be injured by the damp, puts them on and departs"—He notices their passion for gambling,—their ridiculous pride, and adds, "Even those who altogether deny the existence of the powers above, neither go out, nor dine nor wash, before they have carefully consulted the ephemeris to see when Mercury is favourable, or in what part of the heavens Cancer appears." . . He reproaches them with throwing their creditors into prison on false charges, and keeping

lower classes, who soon forgot the origin of superstitions which ignorance still cherishes among the country population of most countries.

It was chiefly to the Goths in his army that Theodosius owed his speedy victory over Maxi-

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them there till they sign an acquittance, with contrivances to obtain testamentary dispositions in their favour, and concludes with "So much for the senate: now for the people . . . These consume their lives in wine and gambling, and brothels, and licentious pleasures, and spectacles. By them the circus, however, is the most sought of all . . about this they quarrel, each taking a different party: among whom those whose grey hairs and wrinkled faces should make them venerable, exclaim often that the state is in danger, if their party be not favoured in the race . . . When the wished for day of the races arrives . . . they run as if they were trying to outgo the chariots about whose success they are divided in opinion, and lie awake at night thinking of it . . . . At the theatre, lest there should not be noise enough, they imitate the jargon of the Tauris, and utter absurd sayings, very different from those of the people of former times, many of whose clever jests are recorded". . . he concludes all with a reprobation remarkable enough in a heathen, of the disgusting practice of inspecting the entrails of animals to discover the future. After such a picture of the population of Rome, we can no longer wonder that the legions had to be filled up with Germans and Goths; or that a far seeing prince like Theodosius should look to the purer morality of the Gospel as the best cure for the social evils which paralysed the strength of the empire.

mus; they were attached to his person, had confidence in his justice, and served him faithfully and well: but they were learning the art of war under the greatest general of the age, and woe to those whose rule was less just or less vigorous, for they were the subjects of the man, not of the empire; and even this great emperor found difficulty sometimes in keeping peace between his barbarian allies and his own profligate and effeminate subjects. Every one has heard of the massacre of Thessalonica, for which he submitted to the public penance imposed by Ambrosius of Milan; but the cause of the hasty order thus censured is less known, and may give us some notion of the state of things in the empire at that time. Botheric, by his name evidently a Goth, was the imperial lieutenant at Thessalonica, and as the troops of that nation were received into the service as *fœderati* or allies, not as subjects, of course his officers and men were of the same nation. One of the charioteers of the circus had been guilty of an act of such gross licentiousness, attended with violence, that the Gothic commander, with a proper regard as well to public decency as to the laws, imprisoned him. On the day of the games the populace clamoured for the release of their fa-

vourite, and when the Goth, as was his duty, refused to comply, they set on him and his officers, and the few troops he had with him being overpowered by numbers, the general and those with him were murdered and dragged about the streets with every circumstance of indignity. The offence was of the most atrocious description,—the danger to the empire immense, for had the fiery spirit of the Goths been raised to take vengeance for this wrong, none could guess when it would end. A signal punishment could alone prove the emperor's justice towards his faithful allies, and prevent such collisions between the provincials and the Goths in future. The order to execute military vengeance on the guilty city was hastily given, and, as it appears, entrusted to the Goths themselves. A very short time after the emperor, on cooler consideration, revoked the order, and a messenger was despatched to arrest its execution, but the vengeance of these semi-barbarians had been too speedy for second thoughts, and many thousands perished in an indiscriminate massacre. None lamented it more deeply than Theodosius himself, and he submitted to the penance imposed with a humility and genuine repentance which throws a yet brighter lustre on his cha-

racter: but we may be allowed to doubt whether the part acted by Ambrosius was altogether that of a true follower of Christ. The exhibition was theatrical, and had in it too much of that haughty assumption of power over the kings of the earth which was afterwards extended so unwarrantably. The only real good gained was the edict given by the emperor, that in future thirty days should always be interposed between the sentence and its execution.

Fresh disturbances and consequent fatigue wore out the declining health of Theodosius. The murder of Valentinianus by the Gaul Arbogastes, who commanded the army, and elevated his creature Eugenius to the purple, again called the great emperor from his repose:* for Valentinianus was not only the brother of Gratianus, from whose hands he had received the purple, but also his own brother in law. Again his hardy Goths poured out their blood like

* Eugenius and Arbogastes both professed themselves polytheists, and this war may be considered as the last serious struggle of that party in the state. The Goths in the army of Theodosius were all zealous Christians, though of the Areian persuasion, and probably somewhat of religious fanaticism mixed in, and increased the fierceness of the contest.

water in his service,* and after two days of incessant fighting, the hardly won victory remained with Theodosius, who thus, and for the last time, united the whole power of the Roman empire under one head: but the hopes which his subjects might well entertain of many happy years, under the rule of a prince no less great in peace than in war, were speedily blasted by the fatal sickness of the emperor. Four months after this decisive victory his death left the government in the hands of his sons Arcadius and Honorius; both too young for the heavy charge, and neither of them as it would appear, even in after years, of sufficient ability to administer the affairs of a great empire.

The first step of the new government was fatal: the yearly subsidy with which Theodosius had rewarded the services of the Goths was either lessened or withheld altogether, and that haughty nation, aware of its strength, and despising the present rulers of the empire, flew to arms to avenge the insult. Alaric, descended from one of the noblest families of the Goths, had fought under Theodosius, and had asked the

* Ten thousand are said to have been left dead on the field.

command of the imperial army after his death, perhaps intending to protect the children of his benefactor, perhaps to serve his own designs: he was distrusted; and his request was refused, without considering whether he was a man to be so lightly offended. He now put himself at the head of his nation in arms: fresh hordes of barbarians from beyond the Danube flocked to his standard, and very soon he was at the head of a force which there was no army sufficiently strong to oppose. With these troops he ravaged Greece, sparing only Athens; and Stilicho, the regent of the Western Empire, was called to check the victorious Goths. In this he succeeded, but Alaric, by a masterly movement, contrived to escape from his hands and pass over into Epirus, where he opened a negociation with the court of Constantinople, and received from the terrified ministers of Arcadius the military command of the countries he had overrun.

It would be wearisome to the reader, and foreign to my purpose, to go over all the miserable court intrigues by which the greatest commanders in both the Eastern and Western empires were disgusted, goaded into rebellion, or cut off by mutual jealousies. All found

ready instruments in the Goths, Huns, and other barbarians who now formed the chief military force of the empire; and Alaric probably viewed with secret satisfaction the dissensions which were smoothing his road to greatness. He had now been acclaimed king of the Visigoths, with all their ancient national ceremonies: his troops were provided with Roman arms, and instructed in Roman tactics; and he was able to assume the position of an independent sovereign, rather than that of a mere governor of a province under the emperor. This state of things could not long continue: Alaric soon carried his forces into Italy, and the weak Honorius fled before him, but Stilicho, with an activity and energy which justified the confidence which the great Theodosius had reposed in him, collected the forces of the empire in an incredibly short space of time, and rescued both the emperor and the country. Alaric was defeated after a bloody struggle, and Stilicho proposed, and the Roman people were willing to take advantage of the temporary success, and purchase the retreat of the formidable Goth. Alaric once more entered into alliance with Rome, and Stilicho with some difficulty persuaded the senate to consent to pay a handsome

subsidy to the Gothic king, in order to secure his future services. But in the mean time, Honorius, like other weak princes, grew jealous of the greatness of his general; listened to accusations against him which have so little show of probability that it is hardly possible to credit them, and put to death the only man capable of preserving the empire.

The barbarian troops whom Stilicho, like his great master, had had the art to attach to his person, and by whose aid he had rescued Italy from the hands of the Goths, were regarded with hatred by the Romans, and no sooner was his authority removed, than another act of atrocious cruelty provoked and brought on the people who had perpetrated it a deserved vengeance. The wives and children of these men were dispersed through the country, and the Roman people did not scruple to violate all the laws of hospitality, and imbrued their hands in the blood of these innocent victims. The husbands and fathers thus converted from defenders into the bitterest of enemies, only waited for the means of signally avenging their wrongs, and stood ready, to the number of thirty thousand, to join the first invading force which should enter Italy; while the court of Raven-

na,* as if wholly demented, evaded the payment of the promised subsidy to Alaric, took no measures to meet the consequences of his resentment,—and were only aware of their folly when the Gothic king appeared with his army before the gates of Rome. After reducing the city to extremity, he consented to receive a ransom and spared it: but being again provoked by the folly and bad faith of the emperor's ministers,—for Honorius himself was too weak a man to be answerable for their acts,—Alaric once more returned to Rome, and one of the gates being treacherously opened to him, the metropolis of the world was delivered over to plunder.

Still the great body of the Goths was christian, and the orders of the King were much more merciful than was usual in those times, when a town was entered by the enemy. While giving his troops the liberty of plunder he exhorted them to spare the lives of the citizens; opened the two large churches of St. Peter, and St. Paul as a place of refuge, and required them

* Rome had long been forsaken by the emperors. Honorius had been frightened from Milan by the approach of Alaric, and finally established his court at Ravenna, which was strongly fortified.

to consider those sanctuaries as inviolable. Even the precious vessels belonging to these Churches when found in the hands of an aged woman were respected and escorted thither in safety by a guard of soldiers, under whose protection also a crowd of the terrified citizens reached the appointed asylum unhurt.* But though Alaric might thus command his christian Goths, the

* "The barbarians being thus dispersed about the city it happened that one of the Goths, a valiant man and a Christian, found an aged virgin consecrated to God in some ecclesiastical house, and when he civilly asked her for gold and silver, she with courageous faith acknowledged that she had much, and presently produced it. When these rich vessels were exhibited, the barbarian, astonished at their size and magnificence, not knowing yet what the vases were, the handmaid of Christ said, 'These are the sacred vessels of Peter the Apostle—take them if thou darest; thou wilt see to the fact. As I cannot defend them, so neither will I keep them.' The barbarian moved by religious veneration, the fear of God, and the firm faith of the virgin, despatched a messenger to Alaric with the news, who immediately commanded all the vases to be carried to the Church under a strong guard, and with them the virgin, and all the Christians who chose to join them. The house above-mentioned, it is said, was far from the holy seat and half the city lay between them. Thus there was a great spectacle of all walking singly, and upon their head carrying openly each a gold or a silver vase, the guards walking on each side with drawn swords defended the pious procession,

wild hordes who had joined his banner were not so manageable; the city was set on fire in several places; and when he withdrew his troops, after five days' occupation, he left ruin and desolation behind him. This event took place A.D. 410, and the same year closed the career of the victorious Goth. He died after a short illness and was succeeded by his brother.

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and hymns to God, in which both the Romans and barbarians joined, were sung as they went. The trumpet sounded a call to safety amid the destruction of the town and invited all who lay in their hiding places to come forth. Every where they thronged around the vases of the Apostle and of Christ, and many even of the pagans were mixed in profession though not in faith with the Christians, and thus at a time when there was little discrimination, escaped. The more fugitives assembled, the more eagerly the barbarian defenders guarded them from wrong." *Orosius Hist.* lib. vii. c. 39.

CHAPTER IV.

Christian Doctrine and Practice from A. D. 379 to A. D. 410.

THERE are few employments more melancholy than that of tracing the progress of corruption in a nation or a community: it is sad to see high and noble purposes gradually giving way to self-interest or ambition, spiritual aspirations lulled into the dead sleep of an *established* religion, pure morality replaced by fierce dogmatism, and superstition and servility hailed by the indolence of rulers as an easier thing to deal with than a rational faith, and a reasonable submission to just laws. Yet such must be the task of every historian, and its irksomeness can only be alleviated by the hope that in tracing the remote and hidden causes of such lamentable deterioration, he may haply instruct the present age, while recording the failures of preceding ones. The fatal consequences of attaching more value to a professed belief in abstract

dogmata, than to a practical carrying out of the precepts of the gospel, have been more than once pointed out: but there is one result which has not yet been noticed, namely, the deteriorating influence which this system exercises on the minds of the teachers. Once grant that the assent to a certain creed is the only road to salvation, and it necessarily follows that all possible means must be used to obtain this: the souls of men must be saved at all hazards; and if a "pious fraud," as it has been called, can win this conformity from the ignorant, or the dread of suffering, from the cowardly; then the very soul of the teacher becomes contaminated, and he learns to practise deceit, and exercise cruelty, not only without remorse, but with satisfaction.

It is grievous to have to point a moral with the name of such a man as Ambrosius, yet the loftier the mind which one error contaminated, the more complete is the warning. He had received holy orders and begun his education in Christianity nearly at the same time, at the ripe age of thirty-four; and as the controversy between Arian and Catholic was then at its height, he imbibed with his faith the fierce dogmatism of the time, and devoted himself uncompromisingly to the promotion of what he justly considered

to be the truth. We have already seen his unflinching resistance to the imperial power; and so far a man bred to face danger might well go: but the popular mind had to be wrought up to the same point, and it was easier to appeal to their ignorant credulity, than to teach them the rational faith of the first ages, even if he himself had known it: and this proceeding had the farther merit of being much more rapid in its operation. The superstitious reverence paid to the relics of the martyrs already imputed to them the power of working miracles, and no Church was considered quite complete till it possessed some of these wonder-working remains. Ambrosius had been requested to consecrate the new Basilica, or Cathedral, with the same ceremonies as were used in other Churches possessing such relics; and he agreed to do so in case any such relics were found. "In short," he writes to his sister, "the Lord gave his grace . . . I ordered the ground to be turned up . . . I found the proper marks, and calling for assistance, the holy martyrs began so far to show themselves that . . . we found the bodies of two men of great size, such as in former times they are reported to have been. The bones were entire, *the blood abundant*. For two days there was an immense

concourse of people .... The following day we transported them to the Cathedral, and, as we carried them, a blind man received his sight." Upon this he preached to the people, and of course raised their enthusiasm to the highest pitch. No doubt he thus acquired power, and was enabled by the popular favour to make head against the imperial decrees, and finally to establish the orthodox faith: but was the assent to the Nicene creed a matter of sufficient import to contravene for it the laws of THE GOD OF TRUTH? Blood could not have been found about these bones had it not been previously conveyed thither; and the bishop must have known, even while captivating the imagination of the people, the unfairness of the means employed, and the falsehood of the tale he was telling. It was probably by no means the first time that such a scene had been got up; for he speaks of it with the coolness of a man well accustomed to such things: but we have already seen enough of his character to feel well assured that no such gross contrivance could have deceived his clear and powerful mind; and therefore we can only conclude that the observations with which I began are fully applicable here, and that the great soul of Ambrosius stooped

to gain by a fraud that support from the people to which his princely charities had given him a far nobler claim. He did evil that good might come, but, as is always the case, evil,—great and permanent evil was the result, and lesser men followed unscrupulously in the steps of the great bishop of Milan, whose virtues dazzled the judgment, and threw a false lustre on actions unworthy of such a man.

The decline of the Church from its primitive simplicity did not take place without some protests from men of less enthusiastic temperament. Jovinianus, and after him Vigilantius, as we may gather from Jerome's intemperate vituperations of them * opposed the popular superstitions

* He thus commences—"There have been many monsters generated in the world, centaurs and syrens; we read in Isaiah of owls and other strange birds; Job mystically describes leviathan and behemoth . . . Virgil describes Cacus, and Spain had its Geryon. Gaul alone had no monsters, but abounded with eloquent and brave men. Suddenly Vigilantius,—he had better be called Dormitantius (sluggard) who by an unclean spirit fights against the Spirit of Christ, denies that the tombs of the martyrs are to be venerated; condemns the vigils; says that the hallelujah is only to be sung at Easter; calls continence heresy:—chastity, the seminary of licentiousness;—and as in Pythagoras, the soul of Euphorbius is said to have lived again, so in this man the depraved

and endeavoured to restore the pure philosophy of the gospel, and to show that the immoderate fastings and mortifications which now went to make up the character of a saint, were neither commanded by God nor acceptable to him. "Proh pudor!" exclaims the passionate Jerome, "they say that bishops also are of their opinion: if indeed they are to be called bishops who will not ordain deacons unless they be previously married, and who do not believe that there is real chastity in celibacy . . . What then are we to say of the oriental churches, what of Egypt, &c. who will not ordain any but those who are single, or who, if they have been married have ceased to be husbands?"

It is evident from this that among the bishops of the West many were opposed to the notions of Jerome on this point; but, unluckily for christianity, they had nothing but their good common sense to recommend them; but the advocates of asceticism, besides the popular admiration for what seems difficult and uncommon, had also

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mind of Jovinianus may be said to have a resurrection; and in both we are compelled to oppose the wiles of the devil."

I forbear to translate more of a page of coarse invective which could only disgust the reader.

men at their head whose talent mischievously aided the cause. Basilius, Ambrosius, Jerome, and Chrysostom, as the eloquent bishop of Constantinople is generally called, were all distinguished either by their rank or their rhetorical powers, and these threw their whole strength into the party of the ascetics, and thus gave it new vigour, and aided in drawing over men of minds less firm, though perhaps of better judgment.

What the practices of the time were with regard to relics, we may gather from a passage of Vigilantius, preserved by Jerome. "What need is there" says this advocate of a rational faith, "that you should so far honour, yea, rather adore, a something, I know not what, which is contained in that small vase? . . . Why is the dust upon the linen covering to be adoringly kissed? . . . Why, under pretext of religion, do we see according to the practice of the gentiles, even candles lighted in the churches whilst the sun is yet shining?"—"O insane man!" replies his opponent, "who ever thought of worshipping the martyrs? Did not Paul and Barnabas disclaim any such worship? . . . but was the emperor Constantius sacrilegious when he transported the holy remains of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy to Constantinople? Are

we to call our present emperor Arcadius sacrilegious, who transported the bones of the prophet Samuel from Judæa into Thracia? Are all the people fools who went to meet the holy relics with as much joy as they would have shown, had they received the living man?—You say in your book that 'whilst we live we can pray for one another, but that after death no further prayer will be attended to?'—but if the Apostles and martyrs can pray for others while living, even while solicitous for their own salvation, how much more after they are crowned, victorious, and triumphant? for the saints are not said to be dead, but to sleep . . . . but you dream as you write . . . . The wax candles you talk of are not lighted by day as you say: we reserve them for our comfort in the night when we keep vigils.* . . . Yet in the eastern churches, even in those without relics of the martyrs the candles are lighted in sign of joy when the gospel is read, even though the sun be shining . . . . Does the church of Rome do ill when it offers the sacrifices of the Lord over

* The reason given by Jerome why "non vigilemus diebus Paschæ" leaves a fearful impression on the mind of the manners of the times—"ne exspectata diu, adulterorum desideria compleantur, ne occasionem peccandi uxor inveniat, ne maritali non possit recludi clave."

the (according to us) sacred bones of Peter and Paul, (which you call vile dust) and holds their graves the altars of Christ? . . . neither are the monks to be frightened by thy viperous tongue and bite,—or by the question of, If all were to shut themselves up in solitude how could Easter be celebrated, or how could secular men be able to exercise their trades, or who would there be to exhort sinners to repentance? In this way it might equally be proved that virginity is not good, for if all were to remain virgins, as none would marry, the human race would become extinct. But why, you ask, do you fly to the desert? Exactly that I may not hear and see you: that I may not be moved by your madness, and not suffer by your attacks . . . Neither would I have my eyes allured by beauty . . . . . you will reply, This is not to fight, but to fly . . . I confess my weakness . . . I do not choose to fight for victory, lest I should be vanquished . . . Why should I quit what is certain to follow what is uncertain? "—But Jerome had forgotten the vices that could pursue him even to his solitude,

> " . . . patriæ quis exul
> Se quoque fugit? "

and the intemperance or coarseness of his lan-

guage, in which a mind far from pure may easily be traced, shows that a retreat from the active world is not always the road to christian virtues.

Jovinianus appears to have maintained that "Virgins, widows and married persons, who have been baptized, if their works differ not, are equal in merit"—that "whether we fast, or receive food with thankfulness, makes no difference"—and that "all who keep their baptismal vows, have an equal remuneration in the kingdom of heaven." But these very rational opinions are characterized by Jerome as "the hissings of the old Serpent," and he particularises the relative value of different states thus:—"As the produce of wheat differs, so does virginity and marriage. An hundred-fold, sixty-fold and thirty-fold, although from one seed and one soil, is a great difference. Thirty refers to marriage, sixty to widowhood . . . . . but an hundred to virginity." The same extravagant notions of the extraordinary merit of corporeal virginity pervade most of the writers of this age, and the consequence was, a proportionate depreciation of that virginity of the mind which forms the true christian, and which is equally within the reach of the married and the single: for the very works in which bishops and saints

set forth the praise of virginity are often too coarse to be quoted in these pages. This blame attaches particularly to the treatises of Jerome and others, vindicating the perpetual virginity of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The extraordinary anxiety manifested on this point was probably the first symptom of the inclination to deify her which showed itself at a later period. In this century indeed, an attempt was made by "some silly women who went from Thrace to Arabia and spread their doctrines in the upper part of Scythia. . . ." to sacrifice and pay divine honours to the Virgin, but Epiphanius who mentions it* esteemed it a heresy, and condemned it as a work of the devil.

Many causes contributed to swell the number of monks: the onerous military service which might thus be escaped;—the danger from the barbarian hordes which pillaged and destroyed the countries over which they passed, but frequently held in superstitious reverence the buildings and the men thus consecrated to God, and on whom the miracles which the clergy soon became adepts in feigning, had a strong influence;—and finally the maintenance which the

* Hæres. 78.

monastery afforded to those who had no other means of obtaining necessaries. Many were disgusted with the world when all dear ties had been broken in the course of some predatory invasion of Huns, Vandals, &c. who followed one another in quick succession, and thus idleness, cowardice, and despair combined to increase the numbers of these men, who, even in the reign of the great Theodosius were beginning to be troublesome, for we find an edict dated A. D. 390, forbidding those who had taken up their abode in the desert to enter the cities; and requiring them to remain in their monasteries; * a law which was repealed two years after, when the usurpation of Eugenius made it important that no class of his subjects should be disgusted by the emperor, so far as to be induced to assist the enemy.

The quotations already given will sufficiently show the various corruptions which were now creeping into the belief and practice of the church, and which, in two centuries more, had nearly superseded the real doctrines of Christ. The deviations from the practice of the early church may, for this period, be thus summed up.

* Cod. Theod. lxvi. Tit. 3, l. 1, 2.

1. The extravagant honours paid to the remains of the saints and martyrs, amounting almost to divine worship.

2. The habit of praying for their aid.

3. The undue value attached to corporeal virginity.

4. The fraudulent miracles made up to impress the minds of the ignorant.

These corruptions however, were, thus far, though not condemned, yet unauthorized practices: they enter into no creed, and were, it is clear, a matter of dispute among the members of the church. The actual faith at this time received, is handed down to us in a synodical letter of Damasus bishop of Rome preserved by the historian Theodoretus. To this faith, as taught by the patriarchs of Rome and Alexandria,—the other parts of the empire being more tainted with Areianism,—Theodosius required a strict conformity.*

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* The following is the confession of faith sent by pope Damasus to the bishop Paulinus A. D. 381: "As since the council of Nikæa many errors have arisen, and some have even blasphemously presumed to say that the Holy Ghost was made by the Son, we pronounce anathema against all who do not preach . . . that the Holy Ghost is of the same substance, and possesses the

There cannot be a better proof of the danger of attempting to define things of which it is impossible that we should have perfect cognisance, than the anathemata published so freely by the

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same power as the Father and the Son. We also anathematize those who follow the error of Sabellius, and say that the Father is the same as the Son. We also anathematize Areius, &c. who affirm that the Son and Holy Ghost are created beings . . . We anathematize those who say that the Word of God in assuming a human body supplied the place of a rational soul in that body. The Word of God . . . took upon himself a rational and intelligent soul, but without sin, for the salvation of mankind. We anathematize those who say that the Word of God is in any way separate from the Father, or that he is not of the same substance as the Father, or that he will have an end. . . If any one say that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have not always existed, let him be anathema . . . . If any one do not say that the Son is the true God, even as the Father is the true God, that he can do all things . . sees all things, &c. . . let him be &c. If any man pretend that when the Son of God took upon him our flesh, he was not in Heaven with the Father at the very time that he was on the earth, let, &c. If any one affirm that in the death of the cross the sufferings were endured by the divine nature of the Son of God, and not by the body and rational soul which he assumed . . let &c. If any one do not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh . . . let &c. If any do not confess that he has now sitten down at the right hand of the Father in the

bishops of this period against all who differ in the smallest item from a specification of the being of the Deity which can never be more than conjectural, and which from the very na-

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human body which he took upon himself, and that he will come in the same body to judge the living and the dead, let, &c. If any one deny that the Father made all things, visible and invisible, by the Son who became incarnate, and by the Holy Spirit, let him, &c. . . . If any one say that the Holy Ghost ought not to be worshipped by all creatures like the Father and the Son, let, &c. . . . If any divide the Divinity by pretending that as the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, that these three are three Gods, and not one God, by the oneness of divinity and of power . . . if he put aside the Son and Holy Ghost and recognize the Father alone as the one God, let him be, &c. . . . The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not called *Gods*, but *God* because of the oneness of their divinity. . . . The salvation of Christians consists in believing in the Trinity, that is to say, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and in being baptized in the name of the one and the same Divinity, Power, Godhead, and Substance, in which we have believed."

We may trace in this confession of faith the beginning of that corporealization of the notion of the Deity which was the bane of the church in after times. "Christ in his human body is seated at the right hand of the Deity in Heaven." St. Paul had said that he was exalted to the right hand of God as a phrase for power—the bishop of Rome gives a locality and a form incompatible with omnipresence.

ture of the subject, must be so far beyond the reach of human intellect that it is an unwise presumption to imagine that we fully embrace it. Far better would it have been for the world if Christians in all ages had confined themselves to the confession which satisfied the early preachers and martyrs, and which we find in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews:* and the zealous dogmatizers who anathematized so freely all who differed from them, would have done well to remember the declaration of a greater man,—Justinus the Martyr—that whoever attempted to define the name or nature of God farther than he had himself told us, was far gone in incurable madness. As long as these nice distinctions are insisted on, there must be dissensions; for the power of apprehending abstract ideas depends on mental culture; and in a religion purely spiritual, like that of Christ, minds of a lower grade will materialise expressions used only metaphorically, and by the mis-

* *In the Greek*, as the English translation is faulty, e.g. "*by* his Son" should be "*in* the Son" as the same word εν is rendered 2 Cor. v. 19, and thus gives a very different sense. The reader who will take the pains to compare this passage with the writings of the early fathers will perceive their close conformity.

use of terms intended for the better definition of unseen things, bring them down to a level with the capacity of the receiver, rather than the propounder of the doctrine. Thus has *person*, which in the Latin signifies a character assumed, as in the persons of a drama, been supposed by the ignorant to signify an individual separation, and so on through all the subtile definitions of the post Nicene writers, which, when afterwards brought to bear on the rough military intellect of Goths, Vandals, Franks, &c. or on the hebetised minds of the anchorites and monks of the Thebaid, and of Asia, produced a mass of superstition which it is painful to contemplate.

During the ages which elapsed from the advent of Christ to the fifteenth century, the natural sciences were so little understood, that, no doubt, many things were considered as miracles which would now be referred to second causes; it behoves us therefore, in judging of those times, to distinguish between things of natural occurrence, which because their causes were not understood, were held to be supernatural, and those which, being utterly unsusceptible of such explanation, must be weighed by evidence and probability. Of the first description are most of the so-called miracles of the first ages, which, no

doubt, are faithfully recorded, and deserve full credit as to the facts, but which have in them nothing supernatural to the minds of persons well acquainted with natural phænomena: but of the latter it is not possible to give so favourable a judgment, and the marvels recorded by Jerome, Ambrosius, and other writers of this period, must in some instances have been known to be fraudulent, in others, have been received on very insufficient testimony: in none was the occasion such as to call for a special exertion of Divine power, which seldom acts without the intervention of second causes. We cannot imagine the usual laws of material things contravened in order to involve in fresh blood the bodies of martyrs buried at least a century before, and whose blood must have ceased to flow in the natural course of things even before they were committed to the earth: nor can we believe that miracles could be wrought by the perishing bones of persons who when living had no such power, and when the only object to be accomplished was the superstitious reverence for these relics, which very soon superseded the trust in, and dependence on God's providence. But we can easily believe that the credulity of the ignorant might be wrought on by a clever

trick, and that those who wished to produce a sudden effect for a particular purpose might condescend to use a juggler's art to carry out, what they considered to be, a great end. In an age of more science the attempt would not have been made.

In the writings of Ambrosius we find it very distinctly affirmed that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are the actual body and blood of Christ. "You may ask," he says, "how it is that we see nothing of this change?" I reply, "your eyes are blinded lest you should be shocked at the sight of the blood." The quotations already given from the early writers may be compared with this, and it will be seen from the comparison how the spiritual and symbolical were beginning to be merged in the grosser corporeality of an illiterate age. Justinus speaks of the spiritual change in the bread which after its consecration nourishes our bodies for immortality: Ambrosius sees in it a constantly renewed and bloody sacrifice for sin; though still not in the modern sense: for Christ's blood being paid to sin, whose slaves we were, in order to redeem us for his own service; so each time that we sin we relapse into slavery, and a fresh redemption becomes necessary: and thus the

blood poured out in the Eucharist becomes a fresh redemption price paid to sin, and restores us to the service of God once more. The doctrine is therefore in the hands of Ambrosius no more than a corporealised version of the spiritual one taught by St. Paul.

While the Latin church was thus step by step departing from the spiritual sense of religion, in order to bring it down to something which should less strain the intellect, and thus putting bodily observances in the room of mental service, the eastern churches were undergoing a no less fatal change. Whilst the powerful mind and firm hand of Theodosius Magnus swayed the empire, some order was preserved, notwithstanding the corruptions which were fast creeping into the pure doctrine and practice of Christ and his Apostles; but no sooner had his weak sons relaxed the reins of government, than all the evils which had been secretly growing up showed themselves. The state of the church and of religious feeling will be best understood from the somewhat gossiping narrative of contemporary historians: for till we know something of the men of the time, we can scarcely understand the events. I will therefore give a summary of the history of the eastern church during the last

years of the fifth century, as nearly as possible in the words of the original writers.

As far back as the time of Constantinus Magnus the government of the church had been put upon the same regular footing as that of the state; and the emperor having divided the government into four prætorian præfectures, divided the churches of his dominions also into four patriarchates, i. e. Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople. The power which this extensive jurisdiction conferred soon became an object of ambition, then of jealousy, and finally, as the civil power grew weaker, of contest: Rome and Constantinople being the two imperial cities, their respective bishops claimed the pre-eminence, and both were inclined to encroach on the power of the other two; while they in their turn maintained their rights and dignities with much asperity, and not always by fair means. It was about three years after the death of Theodosius Magnus that the famous John,—surnamed from his eloquence Chrysostom, or golden mouthed,—was called to the see of Constantinople. He was a native of Antioch, of good family, had studied rhetoric under the sophist Libanius, and was also a pupil of the philosopher Andragathius: but whilst thus pre-

paring himself for the profession of the law, he discovered so much that he disliked in its practice that he abandoned it, and devoted himself to divine knowledge. Two of his fellow students were persuaded by him to do the same thing, and both afterwards became bishops. They first put themselves under the instruction of two heads of monasteries, but John removed and resided for a time with Basilius, afterwards bishop of Cæsarea, and was ordained a deacon. "He was a man, as it is reported," says the historian, "somewhat more severe in his zeal for chastity, than, from his own youth was becoming; for he was rather angry than persuasive in his exhortations: he was incautious because his own life was blameless; ready of speech, and anxious to reform his hearers, but by such as did not know him he was thought arrogant."

When it was proposed to constitute John patriarch of Constantinople, Theophilus of Alexandria opposed the choice, being anxious to promote Isidorus, a creature of his own, to that dignity;* but various accusations having been

* While the contest between Theodosius Magnus and the usurper Maximus was yet doubtful, Theophilus with a very worldly sort of prudence had sent Isidorus to the emperor with two sets of letters, one to be delivered in

made against Theophilus himself, Eutropius the præfect of the palace showed them to him, and threatened to bring them forward publicly unless he withdrew his opposition, and consented to consecrate John to the episcopate. The prudent bishop accepted the alternative, consecrated John, and retained his own bishopric. When the zealous John attained the patriarchate he immediately set about to reform the lives of his clergy with more severity than was prudent, and hence incurred the hatred of many which was increased by an imprudence of Serapion, his deacon, who on presenting some clergy to him, said publicly, "You will never be able to correct these men, O bishop, till you beat them all with one stick." "It was imputed to him as a wrong," says the historian, "that he never ate with others, and some said that it was because he was conscious of his ungraceful manner of doing so; but I know from good authority that his head and stomach were often painful from extreme abstinence, and therefore he avoided joining in public meals; but he was soon in so great favour with the people on account of his eloquent ser-

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case he found him victorious, the other in case he was vanquished. The manager of so delicate a piece of diplomacy of course was high in his favour.

mons, that the slanders and machinations against him were of no avail, whilst he inveighed only against the vices of the clergy; but when he began also to reproach the great, the hatred he thus excited was more dangerous. The ill will of his enemies found a plausible pretext in his homily against Eutropius, who being at that time both imperial præfect and consul, had endeavoured to deprive the churches of the right of sanctuary: but as it happened shortly after, he fell under the emperor's displeasure and took sanctuary himself. Hereupon the bishop mounting his accustomed place for speaking, began a sermon of severe invective against him, while the wretched man lay trembling under the altar in all the humiliation of fear. This gave great offence, for it was said," and surely justly, "that at such a moment he should have had pity on the suppliant, who in fact was, shortly after, dragged thence by order of the emperor, and executed."

Always active, his next care was for "the Celtic barbarians who had embraced Areianism. With a view to their conversion to the true faith, he made priests, deacons, and readers of such as spoke that language, gave them a church to themselves, and, going frequently thither,

taught them himself by means of a Celtic interpreter, thus reclaiming many from their error."

It was at this time that a fresh question was mooted in the church, as to whether the Deity "had actual bodily parts, and was in the form of a man, or not? and chiefly the simple monks judged him to have a human form, though many dissented from this notion and considered God to be wholly incorporeal, and therefore without form. Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, agreed in this last opinion, and preached publicly against all those who held the contrary; whereupon the monks of Upper Egypt came in a body to Alexandria and excited a great tumult against Theophilus, endeavouring to kill him as an impious person. The bishop being much alarmed, and casting about how he might save his life, addressed them thus: 'I see your faces as the face of God'—'If you indeed think that the face of God is such as ours,' said they, 'anathematize the books of Origen, for he has written against our opinion.'—The bishop complied and condemned the books of Origen, and thus they were appeased for the present. The question would have slept after this, had not this same Theophilus himself revived it on the following occasion. There were in the desert four

brothers of eminent piety, heads of monasteries, whom he was anxious to have with him; they were unwilling to leave their charge and refused, but he compelled three of them to come to him at Alexandria. One of these, Dioscorus, by name, noticing the bishop's covetousness, reproved him for it; whereupon, he being incensed against him and his brothers, dismissed them, and taking advantage of the ignorance of the simpler sort, which he himself had good cause to know, he excited the monks against their superiors, pointing them out as impious men, Origenists, who denied that God had any form. This gave rise to a great sedition among the monks, whereupon Theophilus proceeded with a multitude of armed men to Nitria to aid them against Dioscorus and his brothers, who were obliged to fly to save their lives."

"Whilst this was going on in Egypt, John was actively employed in counteracting the Areian heresy at Constantinople. This sect having its churches without the walls, the congregations were accustomed to meet on Saturday evening about the city gates and porticoes near, and sing hymns framed according to the Areian doctrines, and this they continued during the greater part of the night: at dawn they moved

in procession through the midst of the city, still singing their hymns, and proceeding to the gate, betook themselves to their churches." The bishop fearing lest this should seduce the people from the faith, set up a rival procession, and chant; rendered yet more splendid by a multitude of wax lights, carried in silver candlesticks made in the form of a cross, which the empress gave for the occasion; which provoking the Areians, they one night set upon their rivals, and many were slain in the contest. In consequence of this, the emperor forbade the public singing of hymns by the Areians in future.

In the meantime some monks from the desert came to Constantinople with Dioscorus and his brothers, to complain of the treatment they had received from Theophilus; with them was Isidorus, now become the enemy of his former patron. The facts were related to the emperor, and to John (Chrysostom) the patriarch: and this last received the men very honourably; but would not receive the holy communion with them till the matter had been examined into: a false rumour, however, was carried to Theophilus that he had both communicated with and supported them, upon which he resolved to revenge himself not only on them, but on John,

by deposing him from his bishopric. This intention nevertheless he at present concealed, but sent letters to several bishops inviting them to condemn the books of Origen. He even ingratiated himself with Epiphanius with whom he had previously been on ill terms on account of his having spoken slightingly of that bishop: giving out that he was ignorant of the nature of God, since he held the opinion that the Deity had a human form. Now however he professed to have repented of his own former notions on this head, and to have embraced that of Epiphanius; and thus having deceived this famous man, he persuaded him to call a synod in Cyprus,* where the books of Origen who had been dead almost two hundred years were condemned: not that Theophilus felt any great concern about the doctrine, but hoped thereby to annoy Dioscorus and his friends. In the mean time John, caring little for either Epiphanius or Theophilus, laboured continually in his ecclesiastical functions, and thought nothing of their machinations against him. When however it was perceived that Theophilus had resolved to depose him, many of the clergy and of the courtiers joined

* Epiphanius was bishop of Salamis in Cyprus.

him in the endeavour to convene a synod at Constantinople against him.

"In a short time Epiphanius came to Constantinople bringing with him the decree against the books of Origen, and having visited the church of St. John situated a few miles beyond the walls, he there ordained a deacon. On his return to the city he declined the invitation of the bishop on account of the affair of Theophilus, and chose to remain in his own house, and then assembling what bishops there were within reach, he read to them the sentence against the books of Origen, which some, out of respect for him, signed; but many refused, among whom was Theotimus, bishop of Scythia who replied 'I will neither speak ill of him who has so long slept in peace, nor will I presume to condemn what our predecessors did not reject: besides I myself see no evil in the books of Origen:' and thereupon he read several passages with the comments of the church thereupon, adding, 'Those who condemn this are ignorant themselves.' *

* "Persons of bad character themselves," observes Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, lib. vi. "think to gain celebrity by depreciating those whose character stands higher than their own. Of this sort were first Methodius, bishop of Olympus, then Eustathius, after him Apolli-

"John (Chrysostom) did not complain of the ordination conferred by Epiphanius against all rules, but requested that he would remain with him and the other bishops then at Constantinople; to which Epiphanius replied that he would neither stay with nor join in prayer with him unless he would send away Dioscorus and sign the condemnation of Origenes' works. The bishop of Constantinople however hesitated to do this, saying that such things should not be done hastily. His enemies therefore, now persuaded

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naris, and now lastly Theophilus. These all endeavour to derogate from Origenes, but they cannot agree in their objections; and thus, while endeavouring to inculpate him they do but exhibit his piety in a clearer point of view."

The errors which the sharp eyes of the controversialists of the time discovered in the writings of Origenes are these.

"1. That the Son of God does not see the Father, and the Holy Ghost does not see the Son. (This, of course, he must hold as a true disciple of the early church, which admits no individual separation in the Deity, and reprobates all circumscription of the Godhead in bodily form.)

"2. That the souls of men were once angels in heaven, and were committed to mortal bodies as a punishment for their sins.

"3. That Satan and the fallen angels will repent, and will be permitted to reign with the saints in heaven.

Epiphanius to take the matter into his own hands and publish the condemnation of Origenes on a public feast day, before the assembled people; and at the same time to pronounce judgment on Dioscorus and his followers, blaming John as their defender. The following day therefore, John having heard of it, sent the following message to Epiphanius who was again at church, by Serapion his deacon. 'You have done many things contrary to established usage, O Epiphanius, first in celebrating an ordination in a church

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"4. That Adam and Eve were incorporeal before the fall, and that the skins wherein they were said to be clothed, were their bodies.

"5. That man will not rise in the body." (St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. teaches nearly the same, at least as far as the identity of the body is concerned, and modern science confirms it.)

"6. That the paradise on earth was only allegorical of heaven.

"7. That the waters above the firmament were angels; and the waters below were evil spirits.

"8. That the image of God in man was effaced by sin."

It is hardly possible to avoid smiling at these charges, of which the first proves his orthodoxy, and the rest are matters on which a man might speculate his whole life through, without in the least affecting his christian faith, or making himself a worse man or a less useful preacher.

which is under my jurisdiction; next, in that without my orders you celebrated the holy communion; again, when you refused to accept my invitation; and now again in acting independently. Wherefore take care lest if any tumult should arise among the people, you should yourself fall into peril on this account.' When Epiphanius heard this he was alarmed and left the church. When he was about to return to Cyprus it is said that he sent a message to John, expressing a hope that he would not die a bishop; to which John is reported to have replied, that he hoped he would not live to see his country again. Whether this be true or not I cannot say, but the event was according to the two wishes, for Epiphanius died on board the vessel he embarked in, and John was shortly after deprived of his bishopric." *

It would be useless and unpleasant to pursue the tale of church bickerings any further, suffice it to say that John gave offence at court by pronouncing an invective against women, in which some passages seemed to bear on the empress; whereupon, the emperor being incensed, and Theophilus at hand to fan the flame, a synod was

* Cassiod. Hist. Ecc. Trip. lib. x. Soc. Hist. Ecc. lib. vi.

presently called; and John was deposed and banished: soon after his popularity having caused a tumult among the people who could not bear the loss of their favourite, he was recalled at the request of the Empress herself, but again banished afterwards, and died in exile.

The picture which is here exhibited of the christian church is painful, and we must henceforth look with great suspicion at the writings of its doctors; for when the Patriarch of Alexandria, and so famous a writer and bishop as Epiphanius, could join in preaching the monstrous doctrine of the corporeality of the Deity, spiritual religion must have been at a very low ebb, at least in one part of the church. We shall see as we proceed that almost all the corruptions which soon overspread the church arose out of the same tendency to materialise the gospel, and thus to look on the ceremonies of the christian ritual as substantive benefits, instead of regarding them as the mere *signs of benefits* which will be enjoyed if the soul be in a frame to receive them, but not otherwise. It is thus that every system, whether of philosophy or religion, has lost its spirituality; for man, whilst in the body, finds it difficult to abstract himself from it; and even of those whose educa-

tion may have given them the power to do so, many indolently shrink from the attempt, and acquiesce in a ceremonial worship in order to save themselves the trouble of thinking. Hence arose all the corruptions of the Christian system, and hence they continued. To be always in earnest, always weighing our words and actions, and settling the account on the score of motives only to be known to God and our own conscience, is fatiguing, and brings no praise from men; for who can judge of those motives, and how few will appreciate the actions which spring from them!—It is far easier to suffer the matter to be arranged for us; to perform certain acts, and trust that they will secure our salvation: and those who address themselves to the weaknesses of human nature will, in the long run, have more disciples than those who address themselves to its strength. Christianity ought to amend this, and it will;—but many a martyr must yet bear his cross and suffer for the good of his race, ere man will be persuaded to believe his Creator, and know the felicity for which his nature is framed.

CHAPTER V.

From the taking of Rome by Alaric, a. d. 410, to the Death of Theodoric, King of Italy, a. d. 526.

DURING a long period, the empire of Rome might be considered as the representative of the whole human race; for all followed in the track of its civilization: its laws, habits, amusements even, were imposed on, rather than received by the newly conquered countries: its arts and literature were indolently accepted by the provincials; who having no share in either the government or defence of their native land, had nothing to rouse the mind to exertion; and, excepting when oppression goaded them into revolt, we hear absolutely nothing of *the people*, properly so called. But a new æra is now about to commence: the barbarians who had long hovered on the borders, and learned the art of war while serving in the Roman armies,—which could no longer be recruited from the free citizens of the country,—felt their strength: they

had seen the riches as well as the nakedness of the land, and whilst their cupidity was tempted by the prospect of spoil, they saw also before them the moment for repaying a long course of injury and insult.

From the time that Alaric had plundered Rome the *prestige* of the name was gone: every chieftain of a warlike tribe hoped to do the like, and very soon did so; till A.D. 476 the western empire died of inanition, and the last puppet who had borne the name of Cæsar resigned the purple, without a struggle, into the hands of the leader of the barbarian mercenaries, whose pride or whose humility refused to wear it. Henceforth, therefore, our attention must be devoted to the hardy tribes who, with their wives and children, settled on the lands which their own ravages had desolated, and whose savage freedom, tempered afterwards by the milder influences of Christianity, laid the foundation of a new system of civilization in Europe, whose full developement we have not even yet witnessed, but which seems destined ultimately to draw into its vortex the whole human race. Its progress has been slow, and a long night in which philosophy was nearly forgotten, and religion became little else than a system of gorgeous ceremonies,

followed the subversion of the Roman power, but the effeminacy, and vices, and sensuality of the south were contemptible to the warriors of the north, and out of their wild insubordination grew by degrees an organized freedom and a state of manners, which, even if ferocious and lawless, had less of pollution for the mind, and offered less impediment to the onward progress of the race, than the nominal religion and real debauchery of the Roman citizens or provincials.

A country seldom falls before an invading force whilst its inhabitants are true to themselves; for, excepting in the case of very small states, no numerical strength can be brought against it sufficient to overpower the aggregate of its population. It is only when oppression has alienated the people from their governors, or a general demoralization has made men indifferent to every thing but the gratifications of sense, that we find nations subdued by foreign invaders. Both these causes united to overthrow the Roman empire. The abuses in the government, consequent on want of principle in the rulers and their deputies, the oppression exercised by the great, and the utter moral corruption of all, as described by contemporary writers, explain at once the success of the bar-

barian hordes which now settled within its boundaries. The public taxes were for the most part direct ones; and the sum to be paid by each district being fixed, a few of the chief inhabitants were made answerable for the whole;* the apportionment therefore was in their hands, and thus the burthen, already heavy, was made intolerable by its unequal distribution; the rich being favoured at the expense of the poor "and when," writes an inhabitant of Gaul,† "as has lately been the case, the sum of the tribute is partly remitted in consequence of the devastation of so many districts, the benefit is felt by the rich only. Who thinks of the poor? . . . They are unthought of excepting when they pay the tax . . . . . Where is this injustice found, save among the Romans? The Franks do not practise it, nor the Huns: we find it neither among the Vandals nor the Goths. So far in-

* These persons were called *Decuriones;* and as they had to make good all bad debts, it was very unwillingly undertaken. Hence probably it fell into bad hands.

† Salvianus, a priest of Marseille, who wrote about A. D. 445. Some allowance may be made for the mental irritation of a man who witnessed and suffered from such abuses; but even after deducting somewhat on this account, the picture is sufficiently dark.

deed are the Goths from tolerating such oppression, that even the Romans who live among them are secure from it, and it becomes in consequence the prayer of the people, that they may never again be subject to Roman law; but continue to lead the rest of their lives among the barbarians. Can we wonder that the Goths are not vanquished when the people prefer their rule?— . . . The great, who pretend to take up the defence of the poor, require them first to assign over their property to them under the pretext of sale . . . when the buyer pays, and the seller receives nothing . . . . and thus the father, in order to buy defence for himself, is obliged to yield up the inheritance of his sons . . . . thus the defence even is but temporary; for the sons have nothing left wherewith to buy it . . . . and when the small landholders are thus despoiled, the capitation tax is nevertheless levied . . . thus the proprietors exist no longer, and the revenue fails . . . all property is overrun by vagrant robbers, and the miserable people have to pay the tax for what they have lost. . . . . After the father's death the children do not obtain the inheritance . . . but are ruined by the land tax; and thus those who have been already half ruined by private robbery, are com-

pletely so by public exactions. Hence many of the people finding their homes and fields either ravaged by marauders, or taken possession of by the officers of the revenue, fly from what they cannot hold, and return to the lands of their ancestors as labourers for the rich,* others are reduced by necessity to part not only from their property but their freedom, and sink into slavery . . . . and even this might be borne if there were not even in this a yet lower depth . . . . . for those who thus become the property of the rich, are converted from men into beasts of burthen . . . can we wonder that we ourselves

* Whilst slaves could be bought in the market at a cheap rate, there was little chance of employment for hired labourers; but in proportion as military successes were fewer, the slaves became more scarce. The misery of the country which made proprietors into labourers, thus created a new class which is now numerous throughout Europe, but especially so in England; and when we compare the intelligent labourer of modern times with the barbarian slave whom he has replaced, we shall see how much the human race has gained by the exchange. Vigilantius, the firm opponent of superstition, whose name has already been mentioned, set off in life as a hired servant. I would recommend those who may wish to know more of this period, to procure Dr. Gilly's "Vigilantius and his Times," — a valuable work, of a size and price that put it within the reach of all.

are carried captive by the barbarians, when we have thus treated our brethren as captives? . . And are these things done by the laity alone? are not the clergy involved in the same guilt? . . . . Do not the professed religious follow the same course . . . . and professing to abandon their vices, change their appellation but not their manners? Thinking that the dress is of more consequence than the actions in the service of God, they have put off their former clothing indeed, but not their former thoughts . . . Thus these pseudo-penitents repent of nothing, and whilst abstaining from their own wives do not abstain from possessing themselves of the property of others: they abstain from the pleasures of sense but not from rapine. Oh strange folly! God has forbidden sin, not matrimony." *

This system of oppression led to the formation of those bands of robbers who under the name of *Bagaudæ* or *Bacaudæ* ravaged Gaul about this time. Driven from their homes and soured by injustice, they revenged their wrongs on society at large, and increased their own numbers by spreading a wider ruin. But the frightful picture is not yet complete: Christianity had

* Salvian. de Gubernatione Dei. lib. v.

degenerated into a system of priestcraft: the ceremonies of religion had taken the place of its spiritual purification, and the nominally christian population had abandoned but little of their former amusements and habits. The theatre was still disgraced by representations of the most impure description: the combats of the amphitheatre were not discontinued. "I must return," says the author already quoted, "to what I have said so often; — what is there like this among the barbarians?—Where is their circus, —their theatre, the school of every kind of impurity for the destruction of souls? . . . on the festivals of the church the public games are celebrated, and I ask any one where the greater number of christian men will be found,—in the amphitheatre or the House of God? — Nay, if any one should attend in the latter, and there hear that the public games are about to begin, he will instantly depart . . . But you will say this is not so in all the Roman towns. I grant it. I grant that it is not so now even though it were so formerly. It is not the case in Mentz, but this is because it is utterly destroyed:—it is not so in Cologne, for it is full of the enemy: it is not so in the great city of Treves, but that is because it has been four times taken and sacked:

it is not so in many towns of Gaul and Spain from a like cause, but poverty has only taken away the power, not the wish . . . . Have the people who were intemperate in prosperity amended their lives when adversity came upon them? Has the habit of drunkenness which prevailed during the season of peace and abundance been broken off by the hostile invasion? Italy reeks with slaughter,—have the Italians quitted their vices? . . . Gaul is inundated with barbarians, Spain has been overrun by the Vandals, but the manners of the natives have undergone no change . . . . But why should I speak of other countries when I can tell what I have seen in my own? I myself saw in Treves men of noble birth and high rank . . . of venerable and even decrepit age, while the destruction of the city was imminent . . . . forgetful of their honour, their age, their christian profession, their name, oppressed with gluttony, lying drunk, or filling the hall with clamour . . . only leaving their drunken revel when the enemy was already within the walls . . . I saw what I can hardly relate without tears,—old men and boys intoxicated together, and perpetrating the same abominations . . . till in the madness of their license they began to deny Christ. Could they wonder

at the ruin which followed? . . . I have spoken of the chief cities, how was it in the lesser ones throughout Gaul? Were they not all so sunk in their wickedness that they ceased even to provide against the danger? . . . . Thus the barbarians scarcely appeared before they yielded to them . . . . for 'a sleep from the Lord was upon them' . . . and their calamities have by no means ceased . . . . for those who were not slain by the enemy have been involved in long misery: — some have died in the weary torture of severe wounds, some of famine, some of nakedness, some of disease . . . and the destruction of one city has afflicted many more: for every where, as I have myself seen, the bodies of the slain of both sexes are lying naked, torn by the dogs and the birds, and the fœtor of the dead forms the plague of the living: death generating death*" . . . "and in the midst of all this destruction and misery you seek the theatre and demand of your rulers that the public games shall be celebrated. In Treves they are called for; but where are they to be held?—On the ashes of the houses, over the bones of the dead?—What part of the city is free from these signs of ruin, — where is the earth not saturated with blood?

* Salvian. de Gub. Dei, lib. vi.

—What spot is free from unburied bodies and mangled limbs?—The city is black with fire;—the bodies of the people are lying in heaps upon the graves of their progenitors,—and you ask for the games of the Circus!" *

"But enough of this . . . Aquitaine and Gascony are especially favoured by heaven with fertility and riches; the inhabitants ought to bend before him in gratitude: but what do we find there?—A few, a very few pure and holy men may be excepted from the general condemnation; but the rest, and that far the greater number and the noblest in birth, are plunged in one abyss of vice.† . . . You may say that the rights of the mistress of the house are respected: that she still preserves her place in it . . . Is it preserving her place when the master of the family is the husband of every female in it? For even they who abhor it are forced to submit to his will . . when the lord is licentious the female slave, even though chaste in mind, has no escape. . . . Yet farther to our shame be it spoken, we are corrupt among the far more chaste barbarians, nay more,—they are shocked

* Salvian. de Gub. Dei, lib. vi.

† "Prope idem omnes; pæne unus gurges, omnium gula; pæne unum lupanar, omnium vita."—Ib. lib. vii. c. 3.

at our impurity; for no prostitute is allowed among the Goths, though they do not refuse us this especial privilege of the Romans . . and what, I ask then, is our hope before God?—We delight in impurity; they execrate it:—we fly from purity; they honour it:—fornication is a crime among them; among us, an honour. Can we wonder that the lands of Aquitaine are given by God to the barbarians that they may purify by their chastity the soil which we have polluted?"

To follow the writer through his review of the vices of Spain and Africa would be to cause the reader needless disgust: enough has been quoted to show that the subversion of this great empire was but the natural consequence of the breach of those moral laws of the universe, which never are violated with impunity: and when Genseric, the Vandal, bade his pilot steer to any shore "where God was angry with the inhabitants," he uttered a far deeper truth than he was aware of. The sword of the barbarian fell upon a social state which was rotten to its very core, and nothing interrupted its sheer descent.

The Goths who had been driven out of their own country by the overwhelming numbers of

the Huns, had proved sufficient to break the power of Rome: it is not wonderful, therefore, that when a chief arose capable of wielding the forces of the victorious tribe, he should scorn the race which had been vanquished by fugitives, and feel desirous of appropriating to himself the riches told of by the roving bands who fought under any master, and served Goths or Romans indifferently. The Huns, after driving out the Goths, had established themselves in the country now called Hungary: they were a race of Tartar origin, and are described by contemporaries with all the peculiarities of the Mongols: their food, like that of other nomade tribes, was the milk and flesh of their herds; therefore the destruction of towns and cultivated lands was no evil to them: the wider the wild pastures the better fared their herds: hence, the devastations committed on their march were in great measure systematic;—an improvement of the country in their eyes. The results of such a system may easily be imagined. Already they were formidable to the eastern empire, and the younger Theodosius bought the friendship of Rugilas, their king, with the title of general, and the annual gift of three hundred and fifty pounds of gold. A more terrible ally or enemy

succeeded at his death, A. D. 433, to the throne of the Huns, in the person of his nephew Attila; who, having secured to himself the sole power by the murder of his own brother, in a few years united under his standard all the roving tribes from the North of Asia to the Baltic.*

Meantime the Vandals or Wandals, a small tribe from the country near the Elbe, and whose name and race have now disappeared, had established themselves in Spain in conjunction with, or rather in addition to, other barbarian warriors of the race of the Suevi, Alani, and Goths. The Roman general in Africa imprudently asked their aid against his personal enemies, and permitted an army of fifty thousand of these barbarians to be landed in safety on the shore of his province, under the conduct of Genseric their king. The consequence was such as might be expected: the Vandals already knew what sort of opposition they had to expect from Ro-

* "If a line of separation were drawn between the civilized and the savage inhabitants of the globe, between the inhabitants of cities, who cultivated the earth, and the hunters and shepherds who dwelt in tents, Attila might aspire to the title of supreme and sole monarch of the barbarians."—*Gibbon Dec. and Fall, &c.*

man provincials, and they came to plunder and to conquer, not to aid. When Count Bonifacius, who had invited, sought to dismiss his dangerous allies, Genseric at once declared his intention of remaining in the country, and maintained his word in a battle, where the Roman force was defeated: but fearing that if he was encountered by the whole force of the empire his troops would be too few for the contest, he sought and obtained the alliance of Attila, who soon made a powerful diversion in his favour by invading Gaul with an immense army. Ætius, the Roman general, having secured the aid of Theoderic king of the Visigoths, met him in the plains near Chalons, and in a murderous battle gave him so severe a check that Attila, alarmed at the numbers he had lost, thought fit to retreat, and shortly after died.

The empire which he had so rapidly obtained was split at his death by the dissentions, no less of the chiefs who had submitted to his superior genius, than of the sons of his numerous wives: each set up his separate standard, and the power of the Huns was broken. It has left no trace in Europe save the ruins of cities, once flourishing, whose sites are now only to be traced here and there by a few mouldering walls or buried

foundations. It is not often that one battle has consequences so important; but we may probably have to thank the patrician Ætius, and the brave old Visigoth Theoderic, who on that bloody field bought the victory with his life, for the freedom and civilisation of Europe.* At-

* The following account, given by an eye witness, of the court of Theoderic the younger, the son of him who fell in the battle of Chalons, will show how much the Visigoths were in advance of the other invaders of the empire. After describing the very handsome person of the young monarch, whose fair skin was frequently suffused with blushes, but from modesty only, not from anger, he goes on :—" He rises before day, and first, with a small retinue, hears prayers from the priests of his persuasion" (the Visigoths were Areians) " and is sedulously reverent in his demeanour, though, to a close observer, it might seem that this is rather the effect of custom than feeling. The rest of the morning is given to the care of administering his kingdom. Around his seat are seen his chiefs, at a distance a select number of his skin-clothed guards . . Through these are introduced the ambassadors of other nations, whom he hears : replies in few words; delays his decision if needful, otherwise gives his answer decidedly. At the second hour" (eight o'clock) " he rises from his seat and goes to inspect either his treasury or his stables. . . If he hunts, as soon as game is seen, he takes his bow from an attendant, strings it himself, and then hits his mark with an unerring aim. At dinner, you see no display of barbaric splendour, where the weight of the silver or gold plate is chiefly considered; but there

tila was essentially an Asian conqueror, such as have, from time to time, passed over wide regions only to enslave and to desolate; but the Goths, to whom this victory gave for a time the supremacy among the invaders of the empire, were Christian, and much as that name had degenerated from its first import, still there was, in that great and all embracing philosophy, a resource for every possible phase of man's existence: humanising, even in some of its superstitions, to those who embraced it heartily; for its honours were paid, not to warriors and conquerors, but to men who had loved the truth and died for it; and the so-called Queen of Heaven was merciful and lovely, chaste and pure. The *Magnificat* could not be sung before those rude warriors without reading them a lesson such as they were not wont to hear, and which they must be the better for hearing.

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is elegance throughout. The wine is supplied at such long intervals that thirst is more possible than drunkenness, and the service of the table displays at once the elegance of Greece, the abundance of Gaul, and the speed of Italy. Every where you see public magnificence, private diligence, and royal care. After the midday meal he takes no sleep, or scarcely any, but calls for some game and amuses himself good humouredly with his friends—I say what I feel, that he dreads the being feared. At

Odoacer, when he snatched the purple from the weak prince whom after-times in derision termed Augustulus, contented himself with claiming from the Eastern Emperor the title of patrician; and though he exercised the power of a king, never assumed the insignia. He was a Christian of the Areian sect, and not altogether uncivilized: in a happier time he might have reigned with credit to himself and benefit to his subjects; but long misgovernment had ruined the country, and the lawless bands who had placed him on the throne claimed their reward. One third of the lands of Italy was given up to them, and ignorant as they were of the arts of peace, it is not wonderful if the decay of agriculture and trade was rather hastened than delayed by this assignment. The most fruitful parts of the country lay desolate:—the peasantry, as we have already seen, had disappeared;—

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the ninth hour" (three o'clock) "the public business recommences, and all who have complaints to make are heard till supper time. Sometimes, during supper, jesters and mimics are allowed to amuse the company, but are not allowed to say or do any thing offensive. No female musicians are allowed, and none but grave strains of music. As soon as he retires from table the nocturnal guards are set, who watch through the first hours of sleep."—Apollinar. Sidonii Epist. lib. i. ep. 2.

slaves were no longer to be won by successful warfare, and the impoverished proprietors could no longer afford to purchase enough for the cultivation of a soil, which, however fertile, requires constant attention to secure its productions. The want of proper drainage produced miasmata, which consumed those by fever whom war, famine, and pestilence had spared; and the heavy rains of a southern climate, by washing down the earth from the face of the hills, soon left large tracts unfit for habitation.

The Ostrogoths had separated their interests from those of the Visigoths ever since the time of Theodosius Magnus; and at the great battle of Chalons they fought under the banner of Attila against Ætius and Theoderic, but when at the death of the great Hun chief, his sons proposed to divide the empire between them, the Gepidæ first, and afterwards the Ostrogoths and several other tribes, asserted their independence, and obtaining lands from the Eastern Emperor, settled in Dacia, Pannonia,* and Mœsia. Theo-

* Pannonia appears to have been the part of Hungary lying nearest to Austria. Dacia stretched from thence to the Black Sea, and Mœsia lay immediately below Dacia and Pannonia, and extended from the Adriatic to the Euxine.

deric or Theuderic, descended from the royal blood of the Amali, and son of one of the chiefs of the Ostrogoths, passed ten years of his early youth, from eight to eighteen, at Constantinople, as a pledge of the peaceable intentions of his tribe. There he received all the instruction which his barbarian prejudices would accept: in the exercises of war he was a proficient, and his after life did honour to his masters in this art:—in his manners he was polished, but the drudgery of school was repugnant to his notions of freedom, and he never was able to write. For some time after he ascended the throne of his fathers he was the honoured ally of the eastern empire, but his people were a reckless wild tribe, difficult to satisfy or to restrain, and when he asked permission to wrest the kingdom of Italy from the hands of Odoacer, the request seems to have been granted rather with a view of removing a dangerous servant than from any hope that he would conquer for another.

The march of Theoderic was the migration of a tribe, rather than the advance of an army: the wives, children, and whatever valuable property they might possess, followed in waggons the steps of his warriors, and the bold enterprize was crowned with complete success. In

a short time he was acknowledged king of Italy, and under his sway Rome regained something of its former splendour, for though he never assumed either the name or the pomp of an emperor, but chose rather his national title of *king*, yet his subjects found in him all the qualities that empire requires. He was beyond measure careful of justice, says a contemporary historian, gave stability to the laws, and defended the country and its inhabitants from the barbarians. Wise and courageous to the highest degree, he perpetrated no injustice himself, nor allowed it in others; neither did he allow his Goths to take more than that part of the lands which Odoacer had given to his supporters. He was, in all things that became an emperor, nothing behind the best, and was beloved equally by the Goths and the Italians.*

While Theoderic was peaceably ruling in Italy, and striving to repair, by his wise administration, some of the misery of his new subjects, on the side of Gaul a fresh empire was arising.† The Visigoths had already appro-

* Procopii de Bell. Goth. lib. i. c. 1.

† The part of the empire known as Gaul at that time embraced, besides France, a part of Germany, the Netherlands, the chief of Switzerland, and Savoy.

priated to themselves the southern part of the province, and had added by degrees to their dominion a considerable part of Spain. The Burgundians were recognised as actual possessors of the eastern part of Gaul as early as A. D. 413, in a treaty between Gondicaire, their chief, and the emperor Honorius: and between A. D. 400 and A. D. 440, Treves had been four times sacked by the Franks, who appear at the same time to have established settlements along the Rhine. It is impossible here to follow the history of barbarous tribes, where the throne was usually won by the murder of one or more brothers in the struggle for pre-eminence: suffice it to say that Clovis, a natural son of Childeric, king of a tribe of Franks established at Tournai, succeeded to his father's power A. D. 481, without a murder, and allied himself with the chiefs of other Frank tribes, so as to be able to bring their forces into the field with his own. He still adhered to the heathen faith of Germany, but had married a Burgundian princess, who professed orthodox Christianity. Like Constantinus Magnus, the warlike monarch seems to have put the question as to the religious faith he should profess, to the arbitrement of arms, and, in a battle with the Germans, who had in-

vaded the lands of his tribe, finding his troops nearly overpowered, and the aid of his gods unavailing, as it appeared; he at once addressed his prayer to the God of the Christians, whom his wife had so often urged him to acknowledge. The victory was gained by the Franks;—the chief of the Germans killed;—and he hastened to fulfil the vow which he had made in the heat of battle, that the God who crowned his arms with success should be his God in future. It was not difficult to persuade warriors to adore the Deity who had given them victory, and three thousand Franks received baptism at the same time as their king from the hands of Remi bishop of Rheims and his assistants, A. D. 496.

How much of Christianity was known by these numerous converts may be judged from the fact that the bishop spoke only Latin, and the Franks understood only their own German dialect: but this offered no obstacle to the conversion: the victory of Tolbiac had removed the main difficulties;* the splendour of the Catholic

* "When king Clovis was engaged in war against the Germans, by the persuasion of the queen, he vowed that if he obtained the victory, he would become a Christian. When both armies had joined battle, and the slaughter was great, Clovis exclaimed, 'I invoke the God whom

ritual, and some imagined miracles did the rest. The change in the mode of conversion at this time is striking: the apostles spoke in the language of the people who heard them: little more than a century before this time, Ulphilas, who did the work of an apostle among the Goths, began his undertaking by teaching them the doctrines of Christ, and translating the Gospels into the Gothic language for their use: the

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the queen Clotilda worships, and if he helps me in this battle so that I vanquish my enemies, I will be faithful to him.' The Germans, turning their backs, fled, and when they saw their king slain . . . . . they gave themselves up to Clovis. And when this king returned to Rheims and remembered the victory above mentioned, being urged also by the queen, he and six thousand Franks were baptized by Remi the bishop of that place, at Easter. And when the bishop instructed the king how our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, Clovis answered, '*If I had been there with my Franks I would have avenged his injuries,*' shewing by these words his faith, and confirming it as a true Christian." — Fredegarii Hist. Franc. Epitomata, c. 21. Gregory of Tours omits this anecdote: he probably was not quite so sure as the writer that it exhibited the true Christian faith of the warrior convert. Yet even in this rude mind there was some sense of justice and right which dictated the indignant exclamation, and an apostle would have found means to work out of it a better product than did the bishops of the sixth century.

Franks learned nothing but that a more powerful God than their ancestral ones had subdued their enemies before them. If then we see but little of the peaceable fruits of the Gospel resulting from their nominal baptism, let us remember with what thoughts they received that rite, and cease to wonder that a mere ceremony, of whose import they knew nothing, left them what it found them.*

The Frank monarch who now reigned over

* Still, though Christianity was not effectually taught, some words breathing its spirit occasionally reached the ears of those who received its forms. In a letter from Remi bishop of Rheims to Clovis, on the occasion of the Gothic war, he warns the king to relieve the afflicted, to sustain and cherish the widow and the orphan, so that all might love as well as fear him. "Let justice proceed out of your mouth," he proceeds, "do not allow any to hope that you will accept a bribe, but let your tribunal be open to all alike, so that none may go away disheartened . . . liberate captives from the yoke of slavery; let no one who enters your presence feel himself a stranger. Be cheerful with the young and attentive to the old, that thus you may have the character of having reigned nobly."—Bibliotheca Patrum Vet. vol. x. Yet the flattery which was lavished on Clovis by Christian bishops went far to lessen the effect of these lessons: and it must sometimes have struck the keen sense of the barbarian that as *their* morality and their practice was at variance, why might not *his* be so also?

the foes whom he had vanquished as well as his own tribe, was nearly the first of the barbarian converts who acknowledged the Nicene faith; it was therefore clearly the interest of the clergy of Gaul—probably there were many who thought it also a duty—to support the power of Clovis, and it is likely that their influence contributed not a little to increase his power. When he gave battle to the Germans at Tolbiac his own force did not exceed three thousand men;—by the end of the century his dominion extended to the sea on the one side, and on the three others stretched to the Loire, where it touched upon the Visigoths; to the Rhone, where it reached the frontier of the Burgundians; and to the Rhine, which separated it from Germany.* He thus held under his sway at least a third part of the Roman province of Gaul. But the relation of the Franks and the natives was that of victor and vanquished: and the warriors of Clovis stood in much the same position with regard to the inhabitants, and with the same consequences, that the Spartans stood to the Periœci and Helots of Lacedæmon. They were the privileged race; the vanquished culti-

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, Vol. i. p. 191.

vated the earth for them, and received their share of the produce only in consideration of their so doing.

Traces of this system will be found throughout Europe, which have for the most part only been obliterated by bloody revolutions. The descendants of the conquering race formed the nobility of the country: the immunity from taxation, the vexatious claims on the peasantry for service and labour, were all remnants of the time when the unwarlike inhabitants thought themselves happy if they could keep a part of their patrimony and their liberty, by giving up a large share of both: and this was borne quietly while the military power of the conquerors was paramount: but when the chiefs, in their pride, began to beard the king, he naturally turned elsewhere for support. Then arose municipal institutions, guilds, companies, with privileges granted by the monarch to counterbalance the fierce power of the nobles: the vanquished, in their turn, became numerous, then powerful; (so had it been also with the plebeians of Rome); and thirteen hundred years after the fierce barbarians of Clovis had founded the nobility of France, the descendants of the vanquished Gauls and Romans mixed with the

various tribes which, one after another, fell under the sway of the monarch of the Franks, washed out the laws of the conqueror, and the traces of the conquest, in the blood of the dominant race. In England, happily, the work was more gradual and less bloody, or at least appeared so, from being spread over a larger space of time: in other countries it is still in progress, and those are the wisest, and will be the happiest, who make the changes quietly, soon enough, and not too fast,—which are required by the altered position of the two races.

The Burgundians and the Visigoths, when they established themselves in Gaul, had demanded two thirds of the lands; and so large a portion of the country was by this time lying uncultivated, that the loss was not much felt by the inhabitants, who congregated in towns and pursued handicraft trades, of which their conquerors were ignorant; or, if fortunate enough to retain any property, lived upon its proceeds: while the victors, satisfied with their fields and their flocks, soon lost their migratory and warlike habits, and became quiet herdsmen and agriculturists; a change greatly facilitated by their profession of Christianity. The monarch of the Franks, more provident, or rather more ambi-

tious, kept up his military force by a yearly muster, when all his warriors ranged themselves in camp in the beginning of spring, ready for war, if need were.* It is not wonderful, therefore, that his conquests were gradually extended over a greater space. Two brothers reigned in Burgundia: one asked the aid of Clovis against the other, and the war thus begun, A. D. 506, left the nation tributary to the Franks. Religion next afforded a pretext: he told his subjects, assembled in the Champ de Mars, A. D. 507, that he could no longer permit the Areians to possess the fairest portion of Gaul; and hereupon he crossed the Loire and marched against the Visigoths, then ruled by Alaric II. the descendant of the conqueror of Rome. With a superstition however, characteristic of the times, he gave strict orders to his troops to spare the country of Touraine, which had been the diocese of the holy Martin of Tours, though it formed a part of the domain of the Visigoths, in order to avoid provoking the enmity of the saint;

* This was the assembly of the Champ de Mars. Those who wish to see the laws and customs of the tribes who now settled in Gaul, treated at length, will find the subject fully handled in Sismondi's Histoire des Français, tom. i.

sending, at the same time, some of his officers in advance, in order to consult him as to the success of their enterprize. The mode in which the monarch enjoined them to consult the saint was this: they were to proceed immediately to the church, and listen to the verse of the Psalms which the priests happened to be singing at their arrival, and this was to be considered as the oracle. They heard a portion of Psalm xviii. "Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle, thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me: Thou hast also given me the necks of my enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me." The omen was accepted, and the event was in accordance with it, for, confident of the success thus promised, the Franks overcame all opposition: Alaric was slain in the battle which ensued, and Bordeaux, Toulouse, and Angoulême fell into the hands of the victors. But Alaric II. had married the daughter of Theoderic, king of Italy, and that powerful prince now interfered to prevent the utter ruin of the Visigoths. His general compelled Clovis to raise the siege of Carcassone, and prevented him from making any further conquests on that side. He returned to Paris, and employed himself in consolidating his king-

dom in the usual barbaric method, by murdering all those of his race who could have any pretensions available against those of his own children. The deliberate treachery by which this design was effected deserved to be recorded in very different language from that employed by his ecclesiastical panegyrists: but the fatal spirit of party had already extinguished that of Christianity, and the crimes of the *orthodox* king of the Franks were past lightly over in consideration of his faith; a faith which does not appear ever to have influenced his life farther than by causing some acts of munificence towards the hierarchy of Gaul. At last every scion of the royal race of the Franks was destroyed, and Clovis at his death, A. D. 511, left his kingdom to his four sons, unembarrassed by any competitor.

While Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Italy were thus submitting to new dynasties of kings, Britain, abandoned by the Roman legions, was not less a sufferer from the arms of the barbarians. The credulous writers of the time have filled their narratives with inaccuracies of all sorts, but the main facts are tolerably certain, namely that the struggle was far severer than in Gaul, but that the physical strength and size of the

invaders, continually recruited by fresh hordes, at length prevailed. The contest nevertheless was long, and the result for a time doubtful. The Britons had been trained to Roman tactics; and the traditionary fame of Arthur, and the fact, that the Saxons occupied more than an hundred years in conquering a part only of the island, shows that skill must often have failed the brute force of the assailants. Hengist made his first descent in Kent A.D. 449. Cornwall was not finally subdued till A.D. 941. Many a fierce battle must have been fought during this interval; and the language and appearance of the present inhabitants have so large a mixture of the German, that there is every reason to believe that the Britons held their heathen and barbarian invaders in too much abhorrence to allow any blending of the races. It was probably this fierce warfare which prevented the Saxons from following the example of the other barbarous hordes which had invaded the empire, and receiving from the vanquished their religion, and somewhat of their civilisation. The Saxons remained fiercely idolatrous amid the christian Britons till the end of the sixth century: and all remains of Roman art disappeared from the land. The victors cared not for it: — they

brought their own German habits and laws with them; and the Britons, driven to their mountain fastnesses, had no time for indulging in peaceful luxuries. Whether the inhabitants of Britain had ever been as deeply tainted with the vices of the empire as the other provinces, we have no means of knowing: the longer struggle would seem to indicate a hardier, and therefore a less vicious people, and we shall see as we proceed, that the form of Christianity professed there was less corrupted than it was on the mainland: but the so-called *history* of Nennius, and other writers upon this period of time in Britain, abound with so many contradictions and anachronisms, that we can only draw some vague conclusions as to the actual state of the country when deserted by the Roman legions. It is said that the Saxons were first called in to assist one party against the other on occasion of internal dissentions, and the Picts and other northern tribes of the island are said to have pressed hard upon the more civilized south.

The eastern Roman empire, meantime, passed from one hand to another with little change in the mode of administration. The corruption and weakness of the imperial government made it an object of contempt to the barbarians who

turned their arms against either that or the western provinces as best suited their means of attack; and though in the age immediately succeeding that we are now treating of, the Roman name recovered something of its prestige under the reign of Justinianus, the effort did but exhaust yet more an empire already decrepit, and it soon sunk into utter feebleness and contempt.

Following my plan of regarding the march of European civilization as necessarily that of the whole human race, I pass over the nations which have not yet emerged from complete or semi-barbarism. The road that Europe has travelled they *must* in time traverse. Every year shows us that the aggressive systems of Christendom are narrowing the circle around the old stationary countries of the East: who shall say what another century will bring forth?

CHAPTER VI.

The Spread of Christianity among the Barbarians: the Corruptions in its Doctrine and Practice.

It has already been noticed that the Roman captives carried off by the Goths in some of their earlier incursions had been instrumental in sowing the seed of Christianity among that rude people: and about A.D. 360, Ulphilas, the descendant of one of these captives, undertook the task of converting the nation. He translated the gospels into their own tongue,* and so far succeeded in his self-imposed mission, that a very large portion of the people embraced Christianity. Among the converts was Fritigern, who afterwards nearly overthrew the Roman power in the battle of Hadrianople. Athanaric, on the contrary, adhered to the worship of Thor, and put to death many of those who forsook the

* For this purpose he had to form an alphabet, the Goths having been without a written language till then.

superstitions and ceremonies of their forefathers. It was probably this division of opinion which weakened the nation in their resistance to the Huns, and induced Fritigern to seek an asylum with his christian neighbours, as has already been noticed. Before this, however, Ulphilas, pitying the sufferings of his flock, had visited the eastern court, and obtained from the emperor a grant of lands for his distressed converts, a considerable body of whom he led over the Danube into Mœsia, where they increased in numbers and led a quiet harmless life, down to the time when Jornandes wrote.*

When afterwards, on the invasion of the Huns, Athanaric fled to the forest, and Fritigern, with the larger part of the nation, sought

* "Erant siquidem alii Gothi qui dicuntur minores, populus immensus cum suo Pontifice ipsique Primate Vulfila, qui eis dicitur et literis instituisse, hodieque sunt in Mœsia regione incolentes Encopolitanam. Ad pedes enim montis gens multa sedit, pauper et imbellis, nihil abundans nisi armento diversi generis pecorum, et pascuis, silvaque lignorum, parum habens tritici, cæterarum specierum est terra fœcunda. Vineas, vero nec si sunt alibi certi eorum cognoscent, ex vicinis locis sibi vinum negociantes; nam lacte aluntur."—Jornandes de Rebus Gelicis, c. 51. This writer was the Gothic bishop of Ravenna in the middle of the sixth century.

to place themselves under the protection of Valens, the eastern emperor; the emissaries of this last, who was then eager to advance the Areian faith, easily persuaded the simple people that they would do well to conform to the opinion of the emperor; as, after all, the question was only one of words: accordingly the Goths, wishing to give no cause of offence, and not very well understanding the gist of the question, adopted thenceforward a mild areianism.* The Ostrogoths and Gepidæ, according to Jornandes, received Christianity at the same time "out of good fellowship, because, being of the same stock, it was fit that they should profess the same religion."

The Burgundians appear to have been the next to embrace the faith of Christ, and the tale told by Socrates Scolasticus of their conversion, exhibits so much of the simplicity of a half savage nation that it is probably the true one. Being frequently invaded and worsted by the Huns,—he tells us,—they resolved to seek the

* Quamobrem hactenus Gothi majorem quidem Patrem Filio dicunt: creaturam vero Filium nequaquam dicere patiuntur; licet hoc asserentibus communicare videantur. Cassiodori Hist. Ecc. Tripartita, lib. viii. c. 13.

protection of some new god; and thinking the Deity of the Romans the most powerful, they resolved to embrace Christianity. A party of them therefore betook themselves to a city in Gaul, and, having sought out the bishop, requested him to baptize them. After keeping them seven days for instruction, he baptized and dismissed them, and in their next battle, as might be expected from the confidence thus inspired, they were successful, and thenceforward the whole nation was christian.* Their christianity could have been little else than nominal: but it accounts for what we hear from Orosius, a priest of Spain who wrote about A.D. 419, and who assures us that the Burgundians, when they first invaded and settled themselves in Gaul, received willingly the Christian Religion, and submitting themselves to the catholic clergy, lived a gentle innocent life among the natives, not treating them as subjects, but rather as christian brothers.† The same happy result

* Socrat. Hist. Ecc. lib. vii. c. 30.

† Burgundionum quoque novorum hostium, novum nomen; qui plus quam octoginta millia, ut ferunt, armatorum, ripæ Rheni flumini insiderunt. Hos quondam, subacta interiore Germaniæ a Druso et Tiberio adoptivis filiis Cæsaris, in castra dispositos, in magnam coaluisse

seems to have followed with regard to the other barbarian invaders of Gaul and Spain, where, to use the language of the same contemporary historian "they turned their swords into ploughs and cherished the surviving Romans as allies and friends . . . The churches of Christ," continues he, "are filled with Huns and Suevi, Vandals and Burgundians, praising God and giving him thanks; and those who had the power to kill all, and take possession of every thing, content themselves with a small payment for their labour, and work for hire."*

These are the genuine triumphs of christianity, for here the power of the sword was in the hands of the converts:—the terrors of their first invasion had shown what they could be, and the gentle change which came over their fierce spirit was the work of that blessed doctrine of

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gentem: atque etiam nomen ex opere præsumisse, quia crebra per limitem habitacula constituta, Burgos vulgo vocant: eorumque esse prævalidam et perniciosam manum, Galliæ hodieque testes sunt, in quibus præsumta possessione consistunt; quamvis providentia Dei omnes Christiani modo facti, catholica fide, nostrisque clericis quibus obedirent receptis, blande, mansuete, innocenterque vivant, non quasi subjectes Gallis sed vere cum fratribus Christianis. Oros. Hist. lib. vii. c. 32.

* Oros. Hist. lib. vii. c. 41.

universal brotherhood, which if once heartily received, brings in its train every other christian virtue. The crimes of a few chiefs who embraced this faith, rather as a means to an end, than because they fully received its doctrines, must not be set off against this plain testimony of its effect on the masses, by persons who could not be mistaken, since they were living in the midst of the very men whose change from ferocity to quiet humble industry, they thus record. This fact has been strangely, it is to be hoped not wilfully, overlooked by subsequent historians.*

The first fruit of Christianity among the wild tribes which over-ran the empire was indeed such as had been promised, of good will towards men; but the clergy to whose guidance they submitted themselves had unfortunately been too long accustomed to consider abstract doctrines as points of primary importance, and thus the profession of the Nicene creed in their minds took precedence of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, justice, and mercy. Those of

* Neither Gibbon nor Sismondi, though they both quote Orosius, make any mention of it! — so little can we trust to compiled histories!

the Areian persuasion were no less eager in the support of their own views, and the consequence was, that the conversion of a powerful chief was hailed rather as a triumph for a particular faith, than as an advance towards that peaceful kingdom of God upon earth which every christian is taught to pray for. The Areian sect had lost its influence since the time of Theodosius Magnus; and accordingly its clergy eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity of resuming their power and honours under the Gothic and Vandal sovereigns who had embraced that form of Christianity. To the credit, however, of the Gothic sovereigns be it spoken, the lessons of Ulphilas were not wholly forgotten; they still felt that christians were brothers, and both the Visigoths, in Gaul, and the Ostrogoths, in Italy, extended a complete toleration to their catholic subjects, till some retaliation was provoked by the violent proceedings against the Areians in the eastern empire. Genseric, king of the Vandals, on the contrary, being a man of a stern and cruel temper and impatient of opposition, endeavoured to compel the catholics of Africa to conform to his opinions, and his example was followed by his successors. In times like those I have been describing, when men's hearts are

hardened by the continual sufferings and sights of an internecine war, it is easier to resist one's enemies than to love them: and the catholic bishops, proud and intolerant in their prosperity, again on this occasion evinced a noble constancy when called upon to renounce their faith: numbers were in consequence sent into exile or slavery among the Moors, where they perished of hardships and want, and many of all ranks and both sexes suffered cruel tortures on account of their faith. But the Vandals were not at this time what they were when first noticed by Orosius and Salvianus; for the vices and luxury of Africa had infected them.* Their christianity

* The manners of the Vandals in Africa are thus described about A.D. 533: "From the time that they took possession of Libya they all used baths every day, and filled their tables with all the delicacies which earth or sea could produce. They wore a profusion of gold ornaments, Median vests (i.e. silk) and consumed their lives in theatrical entertainments, races, and the chase. They pleased their eyes and ears with dancers, actors, and music, and all the things which are wont to be thought amusing: passing their time for the most part in pleasant gardens, abounding with water and trees. They had frequent convivial meetings, and eagerly pursued all kinds of sensuality.—The Moors, on the contrary live in stifling cabins, both in summer and winter, and neither snow nor heat nor any other inconvenience

very soon became what that of the provincials had been,—a system of words rather than a vital faith: and it is generally when men have ceased to be anxious to work out their own salvation, that they seek a sedative for conscience in a superabundant care for that of others.

Nevertheless the Areian faith did not spread: the barbarians were too illiterate to fill the episcopal office with credit, the greater part of the Roman inhabitants conformed to the Nicene creed, and in the disputes which were sure to arise between different sects, the advocate of the unity of the Deity had the advantage, not only in the unbroken testimony of the Fathers, down to the age of Areius, but also in the philosophical truth of the doctrine. Persecution never yet stopped the progress of an opinion, unless it went the length of exterminating all the professors of it, and thus in no long time the Areian faith died out, and has no existence in modern times, save in the uninstructed faith of the vul-

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induces them to change their abode. They lie on the earth, and those count themselves fortunate who are able to spread a sheep-skin under them. They have neither bread, nor wine, nor any other desirable thing, but eat grain or flour uncooked, as the beasts do."—Procop. de Bell. Vandalico, lib. ii. c. 6.

gar, whose untutored minds still separate the Godhead, because they are unable to comprehend how there can be different functions and manifestations without a distinct individuality. The Areian faith as has been already observed, was that of the uncultivated man, and so it remains; nor will the church ever be entirely purified from it, till all classes have acquired a capability of apprehending abstract ideas, and amongst the rest, that of an entirely immaterial existence.

This difficulty was felt in all its breadth and depth by the bishops of the catholic faith, when they had to deal with barbarians whose language even, calculated solely for their rude wants, had no terms to express abstract ideas, and whose minds, unprepared by any scientific knowledge, were unable to receive them. If, as in the case of Clovis and his followers, the conversion was only that of warriors anxious to serve a God powerful enough to befriend them in battle, they were likely at first to turn a deaf ear to the mild precepts of the gospel; and time was needed for acquiring enough of the barbarous dialects of the invaders to preach and instruct with effect. We may at this time see and lament the want of right judgment, rather than

right intention, which, in order to meet all these difficulties, had recourse to compliances with their rude notions, and frauds upon their simple understandings, which should render the business of making fresh converts or guiding those already made, both shorter and easier. We can hardly wonder that when the only chance of safety for their fellow countrymen lay in the subjecting these fierce invaders to a milder law, the clergy, seeing the influence which even a natural event could have on these rude tribes, should have sought to increase their power by availing themselves of fortuitous circumstances, or if none such occurred opportunely, by feigning something which should appear to be a Divine interference. It was "doing evil that good might come, no doubt, and as such forbidden, "but then,"—a bishop might have thought, —"how great is that good! May I not be pardoned for swerving a little from the rough narrow path, in order to save the lives of thousands, and at the same time the souls of these bloodthirsty idolaters?"—Let us place ourselves in a like position; and, I repeat, we may lament, but we cannot wonder, nor wholly condemn the mistakes of men so sorely tried. Nay further, when we consider the state of excitement and

terror which prevailed in the Roman provinces while their destruction was impending, it is not improbable that even the clergy themselves believed in a miraculous intervention when the coincidence of events just at the desired moment accomplished some great purpose. That in some cases they did actually believe this is evident from the letter of Pope Gregory I. to Augustine, the missionary, sent to the heathen Saxons in Britain, who writes earnestly warning him not to be puffed up with pride at the miracles which have been wrought by his agency, for the conversion of unbelievers.* Nor is this wonderful, for the extreme ignorance with regard to physical science which then prevailed, naturally led minds which were unable to detect second causes, to look back to the First; and to imagine the government of the universe a matter rather to be accomplished by such means as temporal sovereigns are wont to employ, than by the simple fiat which at once imposed on all matter those laws which were sufficient to accomplish his will through all ages. The untaught

* "Et quicquid de faciendis signis acceperis vel accepisti, hæc non tibi, sed illis deputes donata, pro quorum tibi salute collata sunt."—Bedæ Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 32. The letter bears date A.D. 601.

man does not reject the belief in the Deity, but he believes that He governs by messengers specially employed for particular purposes: every planet was once supposed to have its especial spirit, sent to guide its path through space;—hence the belief in astrology, for it was urged that though the planet itself might be material, its spiritual guide was the messenger of heaven. Disease and suffering, again, were supposed to be the infliction of evil spirits, permitted to do their will for the trial of men's faith and patience, and of this belief we see large testimony in the phraseology of the sacred writers, who necessarily wrote in terms which the men of their age could understand.

The scientific man, on the contrary, is capable of conceiving a higher spirituality.' He finds in the steady operation of the laws first imposed on matter, by which the universe coheres, a far more sublime and consolatory belief: and when he sees that the constant sequence of events caused by these laws, brings about important results in the moral world, believes that those results were not unseen or uncared for by the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, and to whom past, present, and future lie equally open. If a battle won led to the profession of a

purer faith amid a nation of barbarians, which, though not the purest, did actually in many cases bring about a blessed change in their manners, shall we wonder that the unphilosophic believer saw in it an immediate interference of the Almighty? The philosopher believes that the second causes which produced it emanated from the laws, and consequently, the will of the First: both take their own views, according to the degree of knowledge they possess; both bow before the inaccessible greatness of the Creator; but he who is best able to abstract his mind from all earthly and material thoughts in the notion he entertains of the Governor of all things, approaches the nearest to the truth, and consequently, to the true feeling of religion.

Clovis, the chief of the Franks, had married a Burgundian princess, who was a zealous advocate of the catholic christian doctrine, and her first son had been baptized. The death of the child soon after, prejudiced the father against the faith, and it was only when hard pressed in battle that his mind turned to the God of the Christians. It is easy to see that his notions of Christianity must have been strangely barbarous: yet his conversion promised so much of good consequence, that we may suppose a bi-

shop who felt for his countrymen, willing to receive the new disciple on almost any terms; and the more readily, if he himself believed as well as the king, that the battle of Tolbiac had been turned in favour of the Franks by an especial Divine interference; which seems to have been the case; for the almost contemporary bishop of Tours makes no question of it. This writer records at some length the ceremony of the baptism which followed upon the victory,* but the coronation, and the miraculous ampulla said to have been sent from heaven by a dove, were apparently unknown to him, and are first mentioned by Hincmar, bishop of Rheims, three centuries later.† The history written by Gregory of Tours ends with the end of the sixth century; down to that time, therefore, namely an hundred years after, this signal miracle had not been heard of by the careful historian of the Merovingian kings. I need hardly say that this fact is conclusive against its truth. When the sacred ampulla was first introduced is not very clear: if it be allowed here to trace the *probable* growth of

* S. Gregorii Episc. Turonensis Hist. Francor. lib. ii. c. 29, 30, 31.

† v. Vita Scti. Remigii, and Vita Scta. Chlotildis.

falsehood, we may suppose that a vessel was set apart to hold the consecrated oil for the anointing of the kings of the Franks, when that ceremony was first performed: for it does not appear that Clovis, already the acknowledged king of his nation, ever sought any other consecration than the voice of the warriors who had acclaimed him king; and after this vessel had been carefully preserved for a century or two, its venerable age probably led to the notion that it would not have been so carefully preserved but for some extraordinary cause. It was easy then to imagine that it must have been used in the consecration of the first christian king of the Franks, and in an age in which the ceremonies of religion were invested with a superstitious value, the tradition by degrees grew into what has been reported by Hincmar, probably with a conviction of its truth.

I have examined thus particularly into the testimony by which one of these supposed miracles is supported, in order to show what may reasonably be concluded as to the rest. When some one had become famous for his austerities and supposed sanctity of life, it was first of all concluded that he must have the power of working miracles; then natural events, for which a

cause could not easily be assigned in an ignorant age, were considered to be brought about by his agency; his own imagination became impressed with the notion; cures of sickness, in which the mind often exercises so large a control, often followed his earnest prayers,* and the delusion went on. The extreme maceration of the body which at this time was held to be a necessary part of sanctity, increased the evil: for want of sleep, solitude, and insufficient nourishment, disorder the brain, and probably few of these saints reached old age in a sane mind: especially if, as was often the case, they sought thus to expiate the excesses of their youth, and were tormented by the remembrance of sins which they could never wipe out. Jerome repeatedly al-

* The cure wrought upon a paralytic man by inserting a thermometer under his tongue, merely in order to ascertain the heat of the body previous to trying the effect of electricity, under the direction of Dr. Beddoes; is, I believe, recorded by Southey. The man professed himself so much better after the first few minutes, that the electric shock was not given, and he recovered simply by the daily use of the thermometer. Had Dr. Beddoes been a saint of the ninth century, his prayers would have had the same effect on the patient: the brain would have been excited, and would have given that extra stimulus to the nerves, which in the case above mentioned, restored the use of the palsied limb.

ludes in gross terms to the visions of sensuality, the result probably of his early irregularities, which haunted him in his solitude, and which he in vain strove to banish by prayer and fasting. Had he quitted his solitude and led an active life, affording the body reasonable, but not luxurious nourishment, he would have known none of these temptations.

But though we may view, with a considerable degree of indulgence, the almost unavoidable errors of a period when suffering, terror, and ignorance, carried superstition to so great a height; still we must not entirely acquit the clergy of that time; for had they studied the precepts of their Master more carefully, they must have seen that their own practice was not in accordance with them: and the miracles which were currently believed, or at least attested, were ill in accordance with the nature of the Deity as described by the sacred writers. I will give a few specimens. When Clovis was marching to attack the Visigoths, the river Vienne was so swollen by rain that his army was unable to pass it. "Whereupon prayer having been made to the Lord all that night, that he would deign to give some sign as to where it might be crossed; in the morning they

beheld a stag of unusual size enter the stream, and ford it. Accordingly at this place the army passed over." * Here, no doubt, the facts are faithfully related; though, that all was arranged "nutu Dei," we may well doubt, when the passing the river only led to the slaughter of an unoffending population. Again he is said to have been led forward towards Poictiers by a bright appearance over the church of the blessed Confessor Hilarius, as was attested by the whole army; and this was also, no doubt, a truly recorded meteor, though no great object was accomplished by it. One more instance of the conversion of natural events into miracles, so common at that period, shall suffice. When Childebert and Theodebert were about to make war on their brother Chlothaire, their mother Chrotechild (Clotilde) the widow of Clovis, anxious to prevent this fratricidal war, went to the sepulchre of St. Martin of Tours, and there remained all night, in earnest prayer that such a misfortune might be averted. The next day when the two brothers had surrounded the wood in which Chlothaire had entrenched himself, so violent a thunder storm arose, with a tempest of

* Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. ii. c. 27.

wind and immense hail, that the tents were blown away, the horses in their terror broke loose, and fled all the country over, and the soldiers had no recourse but to throw themselves on their faces and patiently suffer themselves to be bruised by the hail. The suddenness and violence of the storm alarmed the leaders, who prostrate on the ground like the rest, had time to think more justly of their enterprize which heaven seemed thus to condemn; and when they arose from the ground, they sent messengers to their brother, and concluded a peace. "There is no doubt," says the chronicler, "that this was gained through the intervention of the blessed Martin."* Here too, no doubt, are true facts, truly recorded, the only thing to be doubted is the intervention of the blessed Martin. Of this description are the chief of the miracles recorded by eye witnesses at this period; it was not till a subsequent age that the outline left by contemporary writers was filled up by marvels which set all probability at defiance.

The monarchs of the Franks were such converts as were to be expected under such circumstances: they were liberal to the clergy, built

* Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. iii. c. 27.

churches and endowed monasteries: and if an Areian prince held provinces which they coveted, they readily undertook to dispossess him: but their lives showed nothing of christianity; and the people, baptized they scarcely knew why, retained much of their heathen practices; for we find that when Theodebert led his army into Italy, A. D. 539, "though professedly christians, they still used human sacrifices; and many Gothic women and children were at that time murdered in this manner, and many more thrown into the Po as the first fruits of the war;" * probably to propitiate the river on their entrance into its neighbourhood: the worship of woods and streams being common among the northern nations.

It is impossible not to recognise in the conduct of these late converts to a nominal christianity, a great deterioration in the character of the clergy. Let that of the Goths led into Mœsia by Ulphilas, and that of the Burgundians when they settled in Gaul, in the early part of the fifth century, be compared with that of the Franks in the sixth, and we shall immediately see that the influence was wanting which had

* Procop. Bell. Goth. l. ii. c. 25.

made the first mentioned of those fierce barbarians gentle and peaceable. The crimes which stain the annals of the so-called christian kings of the Merovingian race, stand out in frightful contrast with the gentler and purer manners of the Gothic monarchs, and evince a proportionate difference in their instructors, for both had been equally barbarous at no very distant period.

In Britain the Gospel had been preached very early: according to the only histories which we have of that period, it must have been about the middle of the second century that a British chief expressed his wish for instruction in that faith, and he and his people received baptism.* The insular position of the British church appears to have preserved it from much of the corruption which overspread the other parts of the empire, as the following extracts from a work "on the Christian life, by a British bishop," written about A. D. 430, will show.

"The long-suffering of the God of mercy may render sinners bold in their evil deeds, but they are ignorant that God's Providence has a twofold cause for thus acting, first that human frailty may profit by his long patience, and second that

* Bedæ Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 4.

he may not have the appearance even, of hasty judgment . . . . O fool! that wilt not consent to be saved by the God who pities thee, and would rather reward thee for thy piety than condemn thee for thy sin . . . . But some one will say, Why do we see the good perish with the wicked? I answer, they do not perish, but escape from persecution and evil men, and are removed into peace . . . and the dissolution of the body, far from being a penalty, is rest and comfort to such . . . Let us not delude ourselves with the mere name of christian, but rather expect a farther judgment if we assume a title to which we have no right . . . who is there so insane as to assume the name of a soldier if he do not understand the use of arms? who would call himself a shoemaker if he cannot make shoes? a smith if he knows not how to work iron? and wilt thou call thyself a christian who doest nothing that a christian should? The name of christian means that a man practises justice, benevolence, integrity, patience, chastity, prudence, humility, innocence, piety: and wilt thou call thyself by that title when thou hast so little of these qualities? The christian is he who is not so in name only, but in action also; who imitates and follows Christ in all things, who is holy,

innocent, uncontaminated; in whose breast dwells no malice, but rather piety and benevolence; who has not a wish to injure others, but rather to do good to all. The christian is he who according to the example of Christ will not hate even his enemies, but rather does good to his enemies and persecutors: for he who is ready to injure others, lies if he calls himself a christian: he only can call himself such who can say truly, I have injured no man willingly; and have lived justly with all . . . I have known some who were so lost and deceived in the mists of ignorance as to imagine that the faith which they profess themselves to have, will avail them before God without any of the works of righteousness; and under this persuasion they commit many crimes, thinking that God looks only at the belief, and not at the actions: and these men not only run into perdition themselves, but drag others after them; thus fulfilling the words of the Saviour; "If the blind lead the blind both will fall into the ditch." If this were the case really, the moral commands of God would be useless; for faith alone would profit us, and good actions would be superfluous. How so impious and abominable an error should creep in we cannot guess; . . for when the Apostle Paul talks of

being justified by faith without the works of the law . . he referred to the circumcision of the flesh, and other ceremonies which were abrogated at the coming of Christ . . If any one ask what is meant by coming to the Saviour, and how eternal life is to be obtained? the evangelist will tell him in the words of the Lord himself; "If thou wilt have life, keep the commandments;"* he did not say, keep the faith only . . . Those may be said to believe who perform their good actions in the name of the Lord; and when Christ speaks of his rejection of the bad, he does not tell them that they are condemned for their incredulity, but for their sterility in the bringing forth good works."†

It is pleasant to find in the works of this writer of the fifth century the very tone of the second, when the doctrine of peace and love which flowed from the pen and lips of the beloved disciple, was yet fresh in the church, and the venerable aspect of the last surviving companion of Christ, when teaching these lessons, was still spoken of as a thing remembered.

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* Matt. xix. 7.

† Fastidii Britannor. Episc. liber de Vita christiana. Bibloth. Pat. t. IX.

Nevertheless the British church was at this time charged with heresy: and about the period when Fastidius wrote, probably as a refutation of the charges brought against his brethren, Germanus bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus of Troyes proceeded to Britain in order to root out, it is difficult to say what, if the rest of the British bishops were as apostolical in their doctrine as Fastidius appears to have been. The account given by a later writer of the events attending the mission of these foreign teachers, is so curious that I shall quote it.

"They were sailing," writes the chronicler, "with a fair wind from Gaul to Britain, about half way; when, on a sudden, they were obstructed by the malevolence of dæmons, who were jealous that such men should attempt to bring back the people to the way of salvation. Accordingly they raised storms, and covered the sky day and night with clouds: the sails gave way, as did also the sailors' skill, so that now the ship was sustained by prayers, not strength; and as it happened, their spiritual leader and bishop, being spent with weariness, fell asleep. Then the tempest, as if its opposer had yielded, gained strength; and the ship, overpowered by the waves, began to sink. Where-

upon Lupus, and the others, being alarmed, awoke the elder bishop, and he .... sprinkled some water in the name of the Holy Trinity upon the sea ..... God came to their aid, the enemies fled, and a calm followed. The winds turned to forward their voyage, and after traversing a brief space, they landed on the wished for shore. A multitude flocking thither from all parts, received the priests, whose coming had been foretold by the predictions even of their adversaries. For the wicked spirits declared what they feared; and when the priests afterwards expelled them from the bodies they had taken possession of, they made known the nature of the tempest, and the dangers they had occasioned, and that they had been overcome by the merits and authority of the saints." *

Germanus, it is said, entered into a public disputation with his adversaries, whom he finally

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* Bedæ Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 17. Bede's history reaches down to about A. D. 665, his death is said to have taken place about A. D. 735, so that this account of the mission of Germanus was written some two hundred and fifty years, probably, after the event, which will account for the marvellous circumstances so liberally scattered through it. A monk in the eighth century was by no means fastidious in his credence.

silenced by a miracle: for a certain blind girl being brought thither by her parents to be cured, and the Britons not attempting to claim the power to do so,—" Germanus invoked the Trinity, and taking in his hands a casket with relics of the saints, which hung about his neck, applied it to the girl's eyes; which were immediately delivered from darkness, and filled with the light of truth . . . . The people were astonished at the miracle . . and . . ardently embraced the opinion of the priests"—who being foreigners, could only have held their disputation in latin, a language not by any means intelligible to the bulk of the people! As soon as Germanus had departed, the Britons resumed their former opinions, whereupon he returned a second time, but apparently with no better success; if we may judge from what occurred when Augustine, the missionary of Rome, about a century and a half later, attempted to impose the yoke of his church on the British bishops; when it is evident that the worst part of the heresy was the independent spirit which refused to abandon the ancient doctrines and usages of the British Church at the beck of any human authority.

The heresy in doctrine of which the Britons were accused, was that of Pelagius or Morgan,

a learned countryman of theirs, who early in this century visited Italy,* and enjoyed the intimacy of several distinguished persons there. It does not appear that he was in orders; but many affirm him to have been a monk of Bangor; an establishment at that time famous for its fine library, and the learning of its members. According to his main opponent, Augustinus, bishop of Hippo in Africa, he was a man of holy life and conversation,† and enjoyed the intimacy of one not a little famous in that day for the sanctity of his life, i. e. Paulinus bishop of Nola,‡ who with his friend Sulpicius Severus pushed to the utmost length the doctrine which the ascetics of the East had introduced into

* There is some uncertainty about dates in the beginning of this controversy, and it is probable that Morgan had been in Italy long enough to see the state of the Latin church before he began to write and teach, which he seems to have done as early as A. D. 405.

† He calls one of his treatises, the work "Viri, ut audio, sancti, et non parvo provectu christiani." Aug. De peccator. lib. iii. c. 1.

‡ Paulinus was of a noble and wealthy Roman family settled at Bordeaux; but having lost his only son, he became disgusted with the world, and resolved to abandon it altogether. He was not baptized till he reached manhood, (a common practice in those days) and pro-

christianity, that salvation could only be secured by so unmerciful a maceration of the body as destroyed the health, and made life itself but one long painful death. To men of plain common sense and sound judgment, it must have been painful to witness these extravagancies of persons otherwise so estimable; and Vigilantius, who had been confidentially employed by Sulpicius, began about this time to write against what he justly considered the superstitious observances, which grew up along with this perversion of christian doctrine. Pelagius had seen the perversion and its consequences with equal distaste, and judged rightly that there must be some false principle at the bottom of the general

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bably that solemn rite inclined him to the step he soon after took; for as we have seen already the society of Aquitaine was not such as could be agreeable to a virtuous and conscientious man. He withdrew to Nola in Campania with his sisterly wife, and there they founded a religious community in honour of Saint Felix, whom he took as his especial patron. There he devoted himself to works of charity in which he employed the whole of his princely fortune, and according to the mistaken views of that age, to self mortification pushed to the extent of injuring his health, and as it would seem also, of disordering his brain. His example went far in producing the mischief of saint worship, and in countenancing the extravagant asceticism of the age.

delusion.* He seems to have thought that he found it in the Manichæan doctrine of the utter corruption of matter, which was daily gaining ground in the church: and which gave rise to the teaching by some of its doctors that man had no power of himself even to wish any good, unless by a previous act of Divine Grace the thought were suggested: a doctrine which at once takes away all responsibility from man, since if the special grace be not granted, where is the sin? for the man is unable to do otherwise than he does:—and if the grace be granted to all, then it amounts to what is asserted by the other party, namely, that reason is given to man by God's especial grace, as the guide of his life, even if circumstances should prevent him from having any other instructor.

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* It will be seen from the view I have here taken that I do not believe the grounds of the controversy to have been fairly stated by the opponents of Pelagius. Many of the doctrines imputed to him by Jerome and Augustine he utterly denied; and when called before a synod of fourteen bishops at Deospolis, explained his opinions perfectly to their satisfaction . . . His opponents called this art; it is more natural to suppose that he knew his own meaning best, and that his adversaries, galled at finding their *practices* impugned, perverted incautious words, in order to have grounds for impugning his *doctrine*.

This doctrine he set himself vigorously to oppose; and asserted, on the ground of the command, "Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"—that God could not mock his creatures with a command which they were unable to obey: and that therefore every one must have, from his birth, those gifts which would enable him to fulfil the injunction if he chose; God's grace aiding his will, when the good wish was formed. As a corollary of this argument, he asserted that infants dying before they have committed any actual sin, are saved, although they may not have received baptism;* as also those Gentiles who had led holy lives: therein following the doctrine of Christ, who asserted the salvation of children generally, though at that time no baptism had been en-

* The doctrine laid down by the bishop of Hippo in opposition to this, is happily too much at variance with the express declarations of the Saviour, and the necessary attributes of the Deity to be generally received: "It is furthermore rightly to be said, that infants dying without baptism will suffer the milder form of damnation, but he who teaches that they will not be damned, greatly deceives both himself and others."—August. De peccator. lib. i. c. 21. Yet even this doctrine, frightful as it is, has found some supporters!—It is well for mankind that they are few: for what would be our state if we could so judge of our Creator and Father?

joined,* and of St. Paul who makes a like declaration with regard to the heathen: † and he further asserted what was then reckoned a heresy, but has since been proved by geological discoveries to be a truth,—that corporeal death had not been introduced into the world by Adam's sin, and that his body being animal must have shared the fate of other animal bodies, which have their beginning, their maturity, and their decay.

Pelagius had clearly the advantage in point of logical argument; but the current of opinion at that time was against him; and though many took the same view on these questions, among whom may be reckoned the really well meaning Paulinus of Nola, and his friend Sulpicius, others opposed,‡ and among the rest, Jerome attacked

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* Matt. xviii. 10; xix. 14.

† Romans ii. 10, 11, 14.

‡ There is a curious account given by Orosius, who wrote about A. D. 419, of a conference or synod held at Jerusalem in which Pelagius was personally interrogated. It may give some notion of the mode of conducting these meetings at that time.—"Pelagius being introduced, you" (the assembled clergy) "asked him unanimously if he acknowledged the having taught the things which Augustinus the bishop had replied to?—and here he exclaimed, 'What is Augustinus to me?'

him with all the fierceness of his nature, and loaded him with every vituperative epithet his

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Whereupon all exclaimed that 'the blasphemer against the bishop, from whose mouth the Lord had enlightened all Africa, deserves not only to be turned out of this assembly, but out of the church! . . . The bishop (of Jerusalem) then took up the examination and asked what the charges were? Whereupon, by your desire, I answered 'Pelagius has said to me, that his opinion was that man can be without sin, and keep the commands of God without difficulty if he chooses.' Pelagius replied in your hearing, 'I do not deny that I said this, and I say it still.' To this I answered, 'This is what the African synod condemned in Cœlestius — at this Augustinus, the bishop, as you have heard, was horror struck: this reply of Pelagius, he in his writings condemns; and this the blessed Hieronymus (Jerome) whose eloquence all the west waits for, like the dew upon the fleece, condemns also. For he has already confuted many heretics and their doctrines, in the epistle lately published at Ctesiphon, as also he is doing in the book which he is now writing, to confute this doctrine in the form of a dialogue. There indeed he holds the slippery serpent so fast that he cannot escape.' But the bishop listening to nothing of all this, tried to persuade us to constitute ourselves accusers, and acknowledge him as the judge; to which all repeatedly answered, 'We are not the accusers of this man; we merely mention what the brethren and our fathers think, and have decreed on this subject,—which now a laic ventures publicly to teach, — lest the church to whose bosom we have fled, should be disturbed unknown

imagination could suggest. The bishop of Hippo was more civil,—I can hardly use any other word, —but scarcely more fair in his arguments: for he assumes much as incontrovertible which,

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to thee.'—But he who had already tried to lead us into some admission of the doctrine, said, 'The Lord commanded Abraham saying, 'Walk before me and be spotless,'—and again Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have been 'both just before the Lord, walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless,' which indeed we know to have been said by Origenes. Whereupon I replied, 'We are sons of the Catholic Church. Do not require of us, O father, that we shall dare to constitute ourselves doctors of doctors, or judges of judges. The fathers (bishops) whom all approve and listen to, and whose communion we adhere to, have decreed this to be a damnable heresy. What they decide we conform to. Why do you ask the children their opinion when you have already heard what their fathers' opinion is? . . . . 'But,' said the bishop, 'if he says that, God aiding, man can be without sin, what say you? do you deny the all powerful aid of God?'—To which I replied 'Certainly not; whoever does so let him be anathema . . . and finally with loud clamour we insisted that 'the heretic is a latin, we are latins, the heresy is chiefly spread in the latin church: it is for a latin judge to decide the point.'"—The affair was therefore willingly referred to Innocent, bishop of Rome, by the bishop of Jerusalem who seems to have been glad to put an end to so turbulent a meeting. How was truth to be elicited in such a synod?

ere it could be used as a datum, must itself be proved: as for instance, that the union of the two sexes in marriage has in itself something of sin, and at that time had ceased to be needful,*

* Aug. De Nuptiis, lib. i. c. 14. It is difficult to understand how Augustine attained to his fame as a doctor of the church. The unmitigated coarseness of the treatise above referred to, tells of a mind so deeply stained by his early vices that he could not even comprehend what was meant by the purity which Christ taught. His arguments never rest, like those of the writers of the second century, on the *truth* of the doctrines taught, but on their *authority*, which is but the blind leading the blind: and his refutations of his adversaries consist only in showing, not that what *he* teaches is absolutely true, but that what *they* teach is inconsistent with Scripture according to the interpretation of such and such persons; or if they are unskilful disputants, by showing that they have admitted what upsets their own argument. But to those who ask to know whereon their hopes rest, this is very unsatisfactory, and excepting a few bright passages where the better aspirations and feelings of the man got the mastery over the ill habits of the rhetorician, the works of Augustine have little to recommend them. In them we find the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper spoken of as a repeatedly offered sacrifice (De Anima, lib. i. 10) in contradiction to Christ's distinct assertion that it was simply a memorial of him. In them too we find it asserted in contradiction to St. Paul, Rom. ii. that a man who has fulfilled every duty, will nevertheless de-

since it mattered not, after the birth of Christ, whether the holy had children or not. They could find their spiritual progeny among those carnally born. It is difficult to imagine a man of acute intellect arguing so weakly; since, as it must be the will of God that all should be holy, it follows that his will would be that man should disappear from the earth. Perhaps by looking somewhat deeper into the secret springs of human action, we may find something which will explain the ænigma.

Few choose to acknowledge that their sins are altogether wilful and without excuse; for they are thus degraded in their own eyes, and this is wounding to self love: whereas if the fault can be laid partly on others, or altogether on circumstances over which they have no control, it affords a pretext for a less harsh judgment at the tribunal of conscience. When

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part from this life only to receive utter damnation (Contra duas Ep. Pelagianorum, lib. iii. 14.) unless his belief has been "rectam et Catholicam."—(I quote the words that I may not seem to misrepresent) although this right and catholic faith has, at different times been strangely varied, and if the rule which Christ himself gave "by their fruits ye shall know them" — be laid aside; we should be greatly puzzled to decide as to when we were holding the true faith.

Christ therefore began to teach that the righteousness of action was nothing without the purification of the thoughts and wishes, which are the motives of action, and which man has in his own power; it was considered to be a labour so great, by those who had never hitherto attempted it, that compliance with the command was deemed impossible. "How can such a change be made," was the thought of Cyprianus, the excellent bishop of Carthage, before his conversion: "how can we suddenly and entirely throw off what is either a genuine part of our nature, or, if not, is become so by long habit? For these things" — namely, the vices of heathenism, — "are deeply rooted in us, and how are we to alter them?"* and the same thought is expressed by St. Paul,† in the person of a recently converted heathen, who, while admiring the purity of the new law, found old habits continually warring against his better reason and wishes. To one thus struggling against the whole training of his youth, it was some consolation to think that his very nature was in fault; and the oriental doctrine of the utter corruption of matter found therefore willing credence with many, al-

* Cyp. Ep. 1. † Rom. vii.

though no trace of it is to be found in the words of Christ himself. As the stream of Gospel truth rolled onwards, every age added something of its own, and amongst the rest, this doctrine of the Gnostics and Manichæans, and very soon the mortification and maceration of the material frame which was the source of corruption, was thought to be a necessary part of a holy life.* Every animal instinct and need was not only to be curbed and made obedient to the rational will, but it was to be extirpated, and health and life were to be thrown away in the vain endeavour to be something more than man. All, however, were not possessed with this mania, and many persons who saw that this kind of will worship was leading to great evils, entered

* The attempt to lead a life so wholly unnatural soon led to great scandals in the monasteries, where these mortifications were intended to be carried on, especially in the West: and this probably led Benedict, of Nursia, to found a new religious order, A.D. 529, whose more humane rule would not be liable to so many objections. The Benedictines were to pass their lives in prayer, reading and the education of youth, and were so far true to their rule, that we owe to these learned monks some of the best editions of the works of the fathers. This rule was widely adopted; but the Benedictines, after a time, became no less luxurious and corrupt than those whose place they had taken.

their protest against it, and endeavoured to stem the torrent of delusion. Among these it appears that Pelagius ought to be placed,* for he endeavoured to cut at the very root of the evil by denying the inherent corruption which was put forward as a reason for these excessive severities: but this again took away man's favorite shelter:—if his nature were in itself capable of good, how great was his sin in wilfully degrading it!—Both Jerome and the bishop of Hippo had been deeply stained by moral irregularities in their early career, and when the imagination has once been tainted, it is hardly possible to attain to that purity of thought which a virtuous youth secures: to both these men,

* Vincentius Lirinensis, who wrote about this time, in reckoning up the different classes of heretics, places Jovinianus in the same class with Pelagius and his friend Cœlestius. This affords a farther evidence as to what was the *real* heresy of Pelagius; for we have already seen that Jerome could make out no charge against Jovinianus but that of writing common sense and true Christianity in very bad latin. His latin fully deserves all the vituperations of the learned and fiery controversialist, but his doctrine is that of Christ and his apostles. The enraged advocates of monastic asceticism probably drew consequences from the doctrine of Pelagius which he himself never dreamed of, and when he had an opportunity, disavowed, as we have already seen.

therefore, and to many more in the like predicament, it was consolatory to think that this was a necessary part of human nature;—a frailty common to all men;—and they resented, as a personal affront, a doctrine which made them responsible for even those consequences of early errors; and strove to persuade themselves that mortifications of the body might be set off against an ungoverned mind, and that faith in the promises of the Gospel might make amends for some disregard of its precepts.

The charges against Pelagius were at last referred to Rome, and Pope Zosimus, after examining the case in company with some other bishops, entirely acquitted him of any heretical tenet, and wrote to that effect to the church and bishops of Africa, exhorting them, at the same time, to peace and charity.* These letters, however, obtained but little attention: the bishop of Hippo did not desist from his attacks on the Briton, and whether in the heat of controversy he was provoked into carrying his opinions to an extreme point, or whether as before, his words were misinterpreted, must remain uncer-

* Zosimi Papæ Ep. ii. iii. In Biblioth. Patrum Vet. T. ix.

tain, since we have not his writings; but his adversaries at last prevailed, and *Pelagianism* was pronounced a heresy and anathematized. The two parties mutually accused each other of departing from the orthodox faith: those who followed Pelagius charged Augustinus, Jerome, &c. with introducing Manichæan doctrines:* while they, in their turn, charged Pelagius with deny-

* Aug. Contra duas Ep. Pelagianorum. lib. ii.

The following were the articles of accusation exhibited against Cœlestius, one of the chief followers of Pelagius, by a certain Paulinus:—

1. That he taught that Adam, being made mortal, whether he had sinned or not, must have died.

2. That the sin of Adam hurt himself alone, and not all mankind.

3. That infants, at their birth, are in the same state that Adam was before he sinned.

4. That as it is not by the death or sin of Adam all mankind have died, so neither by the resurrection of Christ will all mankind attain to the resurrection. [The last part of this proposition is no where charged on Pelagius by Augustinus.]

5. That the law can give entrance to the kingdom of heaven no less than the Gospel.

6. That before the coming of the Lord there were unsinning men, that is, that were without sin.

A seventh charge seems to have been added—that he had taught that infants, even though not baptized, might receive eternal life.

In reply, he appears to have affirmed the first: to

ing the necessity of God's grace in order to a holy life, and with encouraging impurity, because he insisted that marriage, being appointed by God, there could be no sin in fulfilling its objects. Both parties of course denied the charges, and it is not easy now to decide on a controversy when the greater part of the works on one side are wholly lost: but if we may be allowed to compare the treatise of Fastidius, as the representative of Pelagius, on the one hand, with the fierce uncharitableness of Jerome and the unwarranted assertions of Augustinus on the other; we shall not long hesitate as to which taught the doctrine of Christ the most truly.

Almost all the corruptions of the Latin church which have since excited so much animadversion, were already growing up in this century. Gorgeousness of ceremony and vesture was affected in order to impress ignorant minds with awe; asceticism, real or feigned, was pushed to the most extravagant excess: monasteries pro-

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have said that the second and third admitted of argument on either side; and when condemned by the synod before whom these charges were exhibited, to have appealed to Rome against what he considered an unfair judgment. Pope Zosimus, after investigating the charges, acquitted him of heresy no less than his friend Pelagius.

fessedly for the service of God, but in reality the abodes of violent passions, increased by idleness and want of amusement, were multiplied to the great injury of all sound notions of morality: for the notion soon became prevalent that a secular life was necessarily one of sin, and that salvation was only to be found in the anchorite's cell, or within the walls of a religious house. Marriage in consequence, if not forbidden, was discouraged, and vices of a most disgusting nature sprang up among those who thought themselves wiser than their God, and proudly refused the liberty of the Gospel. Saint and relic worship were allowed without restraint, after the opposition made by Vigilantius and his friends had been put down, and miracles wrought by the intervention of particular saints were reported as things of frequent occurrence. Alas! for the simplicity of the Gospel which so many heroic souls had held fast at the cost of life!

While the latin church was widening its borders by the conversion of the barbarian invaders, and losing its own purity while seeking to establish an undisputed dominion over them by politic arts and concessions which finally left little of religion but the ceremonies; — the doc-

trinal disputes of the East were carried on with increased vehemence. "When I see the state of the church at this time," exclaims Theodoretus, "and the fearful tempest to which the holy vessel is exposed, I am inclined to use the words of Jeremiah, 'Oh that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears,' &c. for when it is needful in such a state of things that the pilot should watch, and the crew abstain from disputes, that all may ply the oars and quietly obey orders, that the ship may be saved; no one is willing thus to act, but on the contrary, every one rises up against his fellow, and each taking arms, wounds his neighbour as if he were an enemy, while those who stand by laugh at our frenzy and rejoice to see us thus consuming one another." *

These fierce dissentions were mainly caused by two men of violent temper, who unfortunately held a rank in the hierarchy, for which they soon showed themselves unfit. Cyrillus was the nephew of Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, whose character has already been noticed; and at the death of his uncle, after some

* Theodoreti Ep. ad Monachæs qui sunt in Euphratesia, &c. c. 1.

dissention among the electors, he was chosen bishop in his stead. Alexandria was then acknowledged as a patriarchate, and after his elevation to that dignity "he assumed to himself more authority than even Theophilus had ever exercised; and thenceforward the bishop of Alexandria, besides the regulation of clerical affairs, took also the government of temporal things;"* and in the exercise of this power he showed neither judgment nor moderation. "The people of Alexandria," observes the historian above quoted, "are most especially prone to quarrels and tumults, which seldom take place without bloodshed; and soon after Cyrillus was elected to the bishopric, A.D. 418, a dispute arose between the Jews and Christians,—not, as might be supposed, on the subject of religion, but—for the best places to see the dancers in the theatre. This was of course the business of the civil governor, Orestes, and he put up a proclamation on the subject. It seems that considerable jealousy had been felt by this functionary with regard to the interference of the bishop, especially at the cavils he had been wont to make as to the wording of the proclamations:

* Socrat. Hist. Ecc. lib. vii. c. 7.

accordingly, when one of the friends of Cyrillus stepped up to the tablet in order to read it, Orestes ordered him to be arrested and punished; —one of those stretches of arbitrary power which made the people choose the rule of the hierarchy rather than of those who had the power of the sword. Cyrillus vented his anger on the chiefs of the Jews, whom he sent for and threatened; whereupon, at night, they set fire to one of the churches; and, in the tumult which ensued, attacked and killed many Christians. In the morning, when this was known, the bishop took the affair into his own hands, seized and executed some of the Jews, and banished the rest."

This strong measure made an irreconcileable quarrel between the governor and the patriarch: the rumour came to the ears of the monks of Nitria, and fifty of them quitted their convents and came to Alexandria to support their spiritual ruler. It chanced that they met Orestes driving in his chariot, upon which they immediately surrounded it, assaulted and wounded him; so that he was with difficulty rescued from their fury. The man who had given the wound was taken, and, according to the law, condemned to death: but instead of acquiescing in the just

sentence against a man who had attempted to commit murder, the bishop thought fit to exalt him into a martyr; buried his body in the church, and pronounced an eulogium on what he called his noble courage. "The wiser and better sort of Christians, however, disapproved of this proceeding," and Cyrillus suffered the matter to drop: but a yet greater stain was cast upon his ecclesiastical rule by the murder of Hypatia, a woman of singular learning and irreproachable character, who was the head of the school of Plato at Alexandria. Many sought her instruction, and among the rest Orestes; and the adherents of the bishop, in consequence, became possessed with the notion that Hypatia contributed to keep up the estrangement between him and the governor: accordingly the infuriated populace, led by a certain Peter, a reader in the church, stopped her chariot, as they had done that of Orestes on another occasion, and dragging her out, murdered her with circumstances of atrocity, which call forth the just animadversions of the christian historian who records them;* and leave an indelible stain on

* v. Soc. Hist. Ecc. lib. vii. c. 15. This horrible murder occurred in the fourth year after the consecration of Cyrillus.

the character of the man who cherished the fierce passions which could lead to such barbarities, among the people committed to his charge for a very different purpose.

It is pleasant after being obliged to record such unchristian conduct in one whose office ought to have taught him a very different lesson; to turn to the gentler character of Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, who with a true pastor's care, endeavoured to heal the miserable divisions in the church, and for a time succeeded; at least as far as his own province was concerned. Of him too it is recorded that, hearing of the extraordinary honours which some congregations were paying to the body of a certain Sabbatius, he sent to remove it to some other, and unknown place of burial; lest the old habits of polytheism should again grow up among Christians.* This was apparently the last effort made against relic worship in the East: Vigilantius had already been silenced in the West, and from this time scarcely any dared to raise their voices against a practice, which was in fact a revival of the old heathen superstition, which gave divine honours to those who had greatly

* Soc. Hist. Ecc. lib. vii. c. 25.

benefited mankind: and which, before many centuries had elapsed, became a polytheism as gross, at least on the part of the ignorant, as any that had prevailed among the ancient nations.

One more bishop, of gentle manners and truly christian spirit, graced the see of Constantinople; and then the fierce spirit of contention broke forth afresh. There was at that time a preacher at Antioch, by name Nestorius, a German, and consequently unlearned; but whose fervid eloquence, nevertheless, had made him so famous that the emperor, Theodosius II. sent for him to fill the vacant see of Constantinople.* He soon began to declaim against heretics in terms that left small chance of peace; for it encouraged others to go yet farther in the same course, and again hatred was engendered, and blood was shed. Meantime a certain priest, an intimate of the patriarch, had strongly condemned the practice, then becoming common, of calling Mary Θεοτοκος, i. e. the bearer or mother of God: this was complained of, upon which Nestorius defended his friend, but chose his language so ill that he in turn was accused of denying the divinity of Christ, and the dis-

* A. D. 428.

sention ran so high, that it became needful to call a general council to settle the question. The historian, Socrates, gives it as his own opinion, that Nestorius was not faulty in regard to his faith, and merely objected to the term on account of its novelty and apparent disrespect to the Deity: but his haughty temper had made him enemies, and at the Council of Ephesus, which was called on the occasion, Cyrillus of Alexandria, without waiting for the arrival of all the bishops who had been summoned, began the proceedings, and called Nestorius before those who were already assembled. Nestorius refused to answer till all were present, whereupon Cyrillus and his party deposed him from his see. Upon this, the party favourable to Nestorius met, and in their turn deposed Cyrillus, and his supporter Memnon, bishop of Ephesus. When the bishop of Antioch arrived, and heard of these hasty proceedings, he greatly blamed Cyrillus and his associates, as the causers of dissention, upon which they took upon them to depose him also. Nestorius seeing the mischief likely to arise to the church from these quarrels, endeavoured to make peace by offering to make no farther objection to the term in question; but his enemies refused to accept the concession, and he was finally deposed, and ba-

nished to the desert. The consequence of this harsh measure was a permanent schism in the church, and Nestorian christians are to be found to this day, whose faith is pure from many of the corruptions which have disgraced both the Greek and Latin established churches.

The doctrine of the christian church at this period is thus summed up by Theodoretus, and the reader will see, if he turns back to the former chapters of this work which treat of the subject, that it had not yet varied in fundamental dogmata. "We hold fast," says he, "the faith which we have inherited from the fathers, in which we were baptized, and confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be completely God; and completely man, consisting of a rational soul and body: with regard to his divinity proceeding from the Father through all ages; and in these last days, for our salvation, from the Virgin Mary: having one existence with the Father in regard to his divinity, and with us in regard to his humanity. And we confess that the union of these two produces one Christ, one Son, one Lord. We neither in our belief dissolve the union nor suppose it a thing of chance, building our faith on the words of our Lord himself who says, "Destroy *this temple* and in three days *I* will raise it up! showing thereby that the tem-

ple, and the God who dwelt there, were distinct in their nature . . . and that the temple which was to be destroyed was not God; but that he whose power dwelt therein, and revived it, was God. We therefore believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be truly God and truly man, not dividing the one Christ into two characters, but believing the two natures without any confusion to constitute one character." *

It is painful to read of the state of the Greek church at this time: † but the differences of opinion which caused it have now died away, and, it is to be hoped, have left a lesson of wisdom for posterity; namely, not to attempt explanations for which human phrases are clearly inadequate; but quietly to believe that in the

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* *προσωπα*, i. e. the mask of an actor; who in ancient dramas pronounced the words through the mask, his own countenance being thus wholly invisible. We have no one word in our language which expresses this idea thoroughly.

† The following list of the opinions of ancient heretics on the nature of Christ, is curious. "Marcion and Manes deny that the Logos or Wisdom of God assumed the human nature, and do not believe our Lord Jesus Christ to have been born of the Virgin Mary: but believe the Wisdom of God to have spoken in an *apparent* form merely. Valentinus and Bardesanes admitted his nativity, but denied his partaking of our nature. Sabellius the Lybian, Photinus, Marcellus of Galatia, and

precepts of Christ we have the words of the Divine Wisdom (Λογος) teaching us how to win and enjoy all that human nature can receive of good. This faith which comforted and supported the martyrs is not less applicable to present times: to trust in the God who is able and willing to order all things for the good of them that love him; and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is the great lesson which we have received from that Divine Voice: the poorest can practise it; the highest will find themselves the happier for attending to it. Why should we seek for causes of difference while we have yet this simple lesson to learn, and are far from perfect in it?

Paul of Samosata, contended that he was born from the Virgin a mere man; by which they clearly deny that Christ was the eternal God"—(the writer here draws a conclusion which these teachers disavowed; for the Sabellians were called also Patripassians, from believing that the undivided Deity suffered in Christ. They were wrong in their reasoning, but were far from denying that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself")—"Areius and Eunomius maintained that the Logos assumed *a body* only from the Virgin: Apolinaris adds that the body had an irrational soul; since the reason of God became man for the sake of the irrational." Theodoreti Ep. ad Monachos. c. 5.

CHAPTER VII.

From the Death of Theoderic, A. D. 526, to the first Preaching of Mahommed, A. D. 609.

THE death of Theoderic, the Ostrogoth, greatly changed the political position of the barbarian invaders of the empire.* Although unlettered himself, he had learned to value the arts of civilization, and had done his best to humanise his wild subjects. His daughter Amalasuntha had been carefully instructed in all the literature of old Greece and Rome; and her beauty and talents are alike celebrated by a

* The death of this monarch is said to have been hastened by remorse for an act of injustice, "the first and the last," says the chronicler, "that he ever was guilty of towards his subjects." Symmachus, a Roman senator, and his son in law Boethius had attained to a degree of favour which awoke envy. The art of secret information, so common among the Romans under the empire, was not forgotten, and these distinguished men were accused by their jealous competitors of conspiring against the government of Theoderic. He lent too ready an ear to the accusation, and gave the order, first for

contemporary writer, himself a Roman and a man of no mean attainments.* "She spoke Greek," he assures us, "with all the elegance of an Athenian; Latin, with all the magnificence of diction which that language allows, and expressed herself with singular propriety in her own language: thus she never needed the aid of an interpreter," when, during her son's minority she administered the affairs of the state. Her husband had been a youth of the royal family of Amali, and the child of this marriage was almost the last scion of the royal blood of the Ostrogoths. Anxious that her son should be fitted to reign over a civilised people, Amalasuntha chose three preceptors for him, aged and honourable men, to whom she confided the care of his education, governing the kingdom herself in the

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their imprisonment, and subsequently, for their death. A few days after, when sitting at dinner, a large fish having been set before him, he exclaimed that it was the spectre of Symmachus, and being attacked at the same time with violent shiverings, he went to bed, ordering lights to be kindled that he might see it no more. To his physician he deeply lamented the order he had given which had deprived the world of these two illustrious Romans, and borne down by the weight of his grief died not long after.

* Cassiodorus.

mean time "with a masculine spirit, much wisdom, and strict justice towards all. For as long as she held the government no Roman ever suffered in person or property, and the Goths were restrained from doing them any injustice. The children of Boethius and Symmachus too, had their parents' estates and goods restored to them."*

Had the Gothic nation in general been able to comprehend the enlightened views of this distinguished princess, the hitherto glorious career of the Ostrogoths would probably have suffered no check: but the daughter of Theoderic had outstripped the age in which she lived, and what sin is so great as that in the eyes of the many? The Gothic chiefs, who had not yet learned to recognise any greatness but that won by the sword, submitted unwillingly to the rule of a woman whose claim to power was that of the mind; and were themselves too barbarous to understand the wise measures which were undertaken with a view to consolidate the Gothic kingdom of Italy. They therefore encouraged

* Procop. De Bell. Goth. lib. i. c. 2. This praise is borne out by the royal edicts preserved among the works of Cassiodorus. Nothing can exceed the enlightened justice of the regulations there made.

the young prince to disregard his mother's injunctions, and on one occasion when she had found it necessary to inflict some personal correction, he rushed from her presence, shedding tears of anger, to the hall where the leaders of the nation were wont to assemble. The scene which followed is so characteristic of the people and the times that it must not be omitted. "The Goths before whom he thus appeared were incensed, and began loudly to blame his mother; saying that it was clearly her intention to kill her son in order that she might marry again, and that she and her new husband might then reign over both the Goths and the Italians. The chiefs of the whole nation, therefore, having assembled, went to Amalasuntha and complained that she was not educating her son as became a king: that letters were quite distinct from manly courage; and that the teaching of old men could only make him timid and pusillanimous: that he ought in all things to be daring so as to win great glory, and should exercise his limbs in arms unfettered by any fear of the schoolmaster. They said that Theoderic had never allowed any of the children of the Goths to be sent to school, saying always that if they learned to be afraid of the thong they would never face

swords and spears . . . that she must know very well that Theoderic himself after conquering so many places, and winning so great a kingdom had died without knowing any thing of books; 'therefore, O Princess,' they continued, 'let the schoolmasters now be dismissed, and give Atalaric companions of his own age, that he may learn to reign according to the custom of the barbarians.'"

The consequence was such as might be expected: Amalasuntha was obliged to yield, and Atalaric, surrounded by young companions, not in the wild forests of his ancestors, but among the profligate Italians, soon exhausted his constitution by vicious excesses, encouraged the chiefs to insult his mother, and even to conspire against her, and then died at a very early age.

The year after the death of Theoderic had seen the elevation to the purple of a shepherd of Dacia. His uncle had in his youth forsaken his native place, and entered the guards of the emperor Leo: the road from the camp to the throne was always open, and Justinus, the quondam peasant, was saluted emperor by the soldiery A. D. 518, at the age of sixty-eight. Two years after he sent for his nephew Justinianus to aid him in the cares of government, for which

he found himself unfit, and left him at his death A. D. 527, the undisputed successor to the empire. Theoderic had during his life kept up a decent appearance of respect for the emperor, by allowing him to nominate the consuls, and by forbearing to assume the insignia of imperial power: when therefore Amalasuntha found that the Goths were becoming disaffected to her rule, though she still held the reins of government with a firm hand, she secretly entered into communication with Justinianus, as the supreme head or suzerain of the country, as well for the purpose of securing her own safety, as of maintaining order in the country, which, as the royal line had nearly failed, was likely to be the object of contest between rival chieftains. The emperor entered eagerly into her plans, and offered her an honourable asylum at Constantinople: but she was inclined to make a last attempt to preserve the Gothic sovereignty intact, and as there was still a nephew of Theoderic living, though he was now an old man, she proposed to him to take the nominal government, suffering her to be the manager of the whole. He accepted the offer, but no sooner was he put in possession of power than he arrested his benefactress, and after a short imprisonment, suffered

at least, if he did not order, her to be put to death.

When the Vandals took Rome they carried off with them the grand-daughters of Theodosius, one of whom became the wife of the heir to that monarchy. The royal line of the Vandals had thus been in some measure connected with that of Constantinople, and though the emperor now on the throne was not descended from the family of Theodosius, this afforded a pretext for war, when the rightful heir was set aside by another pretender to the Vandal crown; Justinianus therefore, finding himself free from other enemies, resolved on recovering, if it were possible, the province of Africa; the loss of which had so weakened the empire. The hesitation of his generals was overruled by the voice of a bishop, who, anxious to deliver his brethren in Africa from the persecution of the Areian princes of the Vandals, affirmed that he had received a message from heaven in a dream, promising success to the attempt. The prelate's wish, no doubt, had given rise to the dream, but a man had now appeared, capable of realising it.

Belisarius had distinguished himself in the Persian war, which was just concluded, and to

him the emperor confided this most important charge. To the greatest military talent he added a humanity, moderation, and care for human suffering, rarely to be found among conquerors; and his virtues were tested and displayed by a success almost unparalleled. In three months from his disembarkation on the shore of Africa the kingdom of the Vandals was overthrown: and the king, and all the treasures of his kingdom, the plunder of Spain, Africa and Rome, were carried in triumph to Constantinople. Never since the days of the greatness of republican Rome had such a spectacle been witnessed.

The same year which saw the extinction of the Vandal sovereignty in Africa, gave a more permanent glory to the reign of Justinianus. The law of the empire had become so complex that the administration of justice was almost impossible: "in the space of ten centuries the infinite variety of laws and legal opinions had filled many thousand volumes, which no fortune could purchase, and no capacity could digest. Books could not easily be found, and the judges, poor in the midst of riches, were reduced to the exercise of their illiterate discretion. The subjects of the Greek provinces were ignorant of

the language which disposed of their lives and properties," * and Justinianus saw the necessity of putting the legal decisions of the empire on a better footing. No sooner was he firmly seated on the throne than he called to his aid all the most eminent civilians, and after employing about five years in the work, the Code, Pandects, and Institutes of Justinianus were published, A. D. 533. All the ancient laws were declared void, and the Digest thus made under the direction of the emperor was thenceforth the sole law of the land. As was to be expected, it underwent several changes and revisions, but such was its merit on the whole, that it has been the foundation of much of the jurisprudence of Europe, and in some countries is still the rule in all civil cases, and generally of the ecclesiastical courts.†

Confident in the talents of Belisarius, Justinianus was not backward in laying hold on the pretext afforded him by the murder of Amalasuntha; and sent ambassadors to demand satisfaction of the weak and ungrateful man who had committed the crime without calculating the conse-

* Gibbon Dec. and Fall. c. 44.

† Those who wish for a good compendium of its contents will find it in the work and chapter above quoted.

quences. Alarmed now by the tone assumed by the Byzantine ambassadors, and without natural courage, Theodatus consented to yield up the sovereignty, and accept a pension and a home from the emperor; but afterwards retracted his consent, and Belisarius was summoned from Africa to Italy in order to reduce that province also. The Goths prepared for war, but soon found that the man for whom they had sacrificed Amalasuntha was incapable of the charge. The chiefs met in council and elected a fresh leader, of no distinction as to family, but whom they deemed able to lead them to battle. Theodatus having intelligence of their discontent, fled towards Ravenna, but being overtaken on the road by a man who had a private injury to revenge, and who had been incited to the deed by the persuasions of Witiges, the king elect, he was murdered without resistance.

Belisarius had already taken Naples, and now entered Rome without opposition: Witiges prepared for war, but with so little of strategic talent, that though the whole Gothic nation to the amount of two hundred thousand men besieged Belisarius with his small army in Rome, they were defeated in every engagement, their force was diminished by slaughter and sickness, and they

were finally driven ignominiously from their camp before the walls, and the city was saved. In a short time nearly the whole of Italy had submitted to the great man whose humanity and integrity won all hearts but those of his enviers, and Witiges with the small remains of the Gothic force were shut up in Ravenna. Filled with unfeigned admiration for the man who had conquered them, the Goths entreated him to assume the purple and reign over an united people: all offered to submit to him, and when, with the fidelity of a good subject, he protested that he could never reign whilst Justinianus lived, the offers were repeated again and again in the hope of vanquishing his resistance and enjoying the happiness of living under his rule.* It is not

* I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of inserting here a sketch by a contemporary, of a man never exceeded and rarely equalled in either achievements or virtues: a soldier and a conqueror superior to all the temptations incident to his position, without ambition, without cruelty, equally faithful to his king and his God: in one word, a christian warrior. The time described is that of his return to Constantinople after the subjugation of Italy.

"The subject of all conversation was Belisarius crowned with two conquests such as no man before had ever won, leading captive to Byzantium two kings, the

often that a single man stands out in such bold relief from the general character of his age: but

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successors of Genseric and of Theoderic, than whom no monarchs ever were more famous, and against all expectation, putting the Romans in possession of their riches; for it was to the public treasury that he carried the spoils of the war, which in an incredibly short space of time had won back half the empire. So great was the eagerness to see him, that the citizens of Byzantium spent the day in the forum watching for his going out, or his return home, never satiated with the sight; for his movements were like a splendid procession, such were the numbers of Vandals, Goths, and Moors, who always accompanied him. In person he was tall, and superior to all others in beauty and dignity of feature and countenance: he was always easy of access, and as gentle in his manners as if he had been poor and inglorious. His soldiers loved him for his generosity; the conquered inhabitants for his humanity. To the soldiers his munificence was boundless; for those that had been wounded in battle he consoled with large donations of money; those who had distinguished themselves he rewarded with bracelets and chains, and the like honourable gifts; and if any had lost horse, or bow, or any other things in the combat, he replaced them at his own cost. The countrymen loved him because he kept up such good discipline, that no one ever suffered violence where Belisarius commanded, but many grew unexpectedly rich by supplying so large an army: for he paid a handsome price for every thing. When the corn was growing he was careful that no horseman should trespass or tread it down: when the fruit was ripe he suffered no

Belisarius stood alone; many envied but none strove to imitate him: — one hero could not save an empire which was rotten at the very core, and his great talents were thrown away in the service of an ungrateful master who suspected the only man who was really true to him. The latter campaigns of this great general were not so successful as his first, it is true; but it was because the jealousy of court favourites, the mismanagement of the finances, and the maladministration of the local governors, left him

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one to touch it; and what he enforced he practised; for he was a man of singular temperance. He never was known to approach any woman but his own wife, and though he had taken abundance of Vandal and Gothic captives of unequalled beauty, he neither sought to see them himself, nor allowed others to do so. His presence of mind on all occasions was remarkable, and his sagacity enabled him in doubtful matters always to choose the best plan. In the dangers of war he was fearless; in council daring but prudent; in action cautious or prompt as the occasion required. Besides this he was buoyant of spirit under adversity, in success he was neither arrogant nor luxurious. No one ever saw Belisarius drunk. Whilst he commanded the army in Africa and Italy it was always victorious; when he was recalled his merits were known, by contrast with those who succeeded him. No man I think ever ventured to resist his orders, for all respected his virtues and feared his power." Procop. De Bell. Goth. lib. iii. 1.

without either men or money at the time when both were needed.

The Goths in their first alarm had sent an embassy to Persia to point out to the king the danger he would himself incur if the power of Rome were again to attain its former height; and recommending him to make a diversion in their favour, lest, if Italy should be re-united to the empire, the imperial forces should be irresistible. The rapidity with which Belisarius effected his conquest left no time for preparation, and ere Chosroes was ready to act, Witiges and the Goths were already subdued. The Persian king, however, did move at last, and Justinianus, having no other general capable of leading an army, and perhaps fearing that the affectionate importunity of the Goths would at last vanquish the fidelity of the great man whom they were so anxious to call their own, recalled him, only to despatch him on another enterprize, no less dangerous, with a force as insufficient. No sooner was he withdrawn from Italy than the Roman generals began a system of plunder and oppression which soon alienated both Goths and natives. The superstitious observances which were called Christianity, had quite ceased to have any practical influence on society, and Belisarius was

looked on rather as a man of a peculiar idiosyncrasy who had a taste for disinterestedness and integrity, than as a specimen of what that noble system ought to produce, and would, were it preached in its earnest and beautiful simplicity.

The Goths determined no longer to submit to oppression from men unfit to govern, elected various chiefs to the command of their nation, but none proved equal to the charge till Totila, the nephew of one of these, who had held a short-lived sovereignty, was chosen king of the Goths by general consent. So great had been their losses under Witiges that five thousand fighting men were all that he could command at his accession: but he had no longer Belisarius to oppose him. The Roman troops were ill commanded and insubordinate; smaller successes led to greater, and the Gothic chief imitating the example of him they so much admired, treated the places which submitted to him so leniently, showed so much courtesy to his prisoners, maintained the faith of capitulations so strictly, and made himself generally so much respected, that in a very short space of time nothing was left to the emperor of all that Belisarius had won, save a few fortified places which the garrisons did not dare to stir from, and

which the Goths had not yet a sufficient army to attack. Never was the even handed justice with which the moral laws of the universe are administered more apparent: the mind of Belisarius unclouded by vice or excess, was always prompt, sagacious, and decided, and the ground won by arms was secured by the admiration and affection both of his soldiers and the inhabitants: the vices of the generals to whom his conquests were committed, lost, and the virtues of Totila gained all that the Great Captain of his time had won for a master who did not deserve such a servant.

When Italy was already lost and won, Belisarius was summoned to retrieve what ought to have been better governed and preserved; but he was sent thither without either men, arms, horses, or money, as if his name alone were to supply all wants. The public exchequer had been exhausted in expensive edifices and lavish gratuities, and the veteran general's remonstrances met with no attention. His attempt to relieve Rome which was closely besieged by Totila, failed in consequence of the misconduct of the general in command of the garrison;* and

* The stores which had been laid in to meet the chance

the ancient metropolis of the world fell again into the hands of a Gothic conqueror, not unworthy of his success, for though in the first moment of exasperation, he threatened to dismantle the city, he spared the lives of the inhabitants, about sixty only being slain by his troops when they entered,* and at the remonstrance of Belisarius he abandoned his design of destroying the noble buildings, and left the whole intact, with the exception of those portions of the wall which he had broken down to prevent it from again standing a siege.

Rome had been left by the Gothic king without a garrison when he marched his army away in order to subdue other parts of the country; but the active and indefatigable Belisarius was again in the field, and no sooner was Totila departed

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of a siege were taken possession of by the governor, and sold out by him at such enormous prices that none but the very rich could purchase at all, and even their means were soon exhausted. The traffic was so profitable that he took no steps to aid Belisarius when he had brought a convoy of food nearly to the gates of the town: and the town was taken at last because there were no citizens left to watch the walls.

* Totila proceeded *instanter* to the church of St. Peter to return thanks, and put a stop to all violence on the part of his troops. Procop. De Bell. Goth. lib. iii.

than the city was again occupied by the imperial general, the walls hastily repaired, and the place so far prepared for resistance that when the king arrived before it, within twenty five days from the occupation of Belisarius, he was repulsed with ignominy from its broken walls, and had the government of the empire been in abler hands, Italy would again have been united to it. But what could a single commander effect without supplies, and without colleagues whom he could depend on? Deprived of all that was needful to his enterprize, he was obliged to wring from the inhabitants what the imperial treasury denied: discontent followed; and he was finally obliged to retire and leave Italy to its fate. Totila soon reduced the greater part of it under his obedience, and his prudence or his clemency* induced not a few of the soldiery to enter the ranks of the Gothic army. What wonder, when such was the mode of conducting affairs, that the Eastern Empire tottered to its fall?

Totila was left in undisturbed possession of

* When he had less to fear, his barbarian training was manifested in two or three acts of cruelty, but they were more in the character of the age, than his usual mildness.

his conquests for about four years; but then the Byzantine government seemed to rouse suddenly from its lethargy; and a well appointed army was sent to Italy under the command of the eunuch Narses, whose employment in the palace brought him into frequent communication with the Emperor, and who when formerly sent with succours to Belisarius, had refused to obey his orders, and thus caused the utter destruction of Milan. Now at last the warlike equipments, which the jealousy of Narses had refused to the great commander whom he could no otherwise ruin,* were complete; the Goths met him in arms, but suffered a complete and sanguinary defeat, caused, as usual, by their want of skill in military evolutions. Totila himself was pierced by a lance, and carried from the field by his faithful attendants only to die at a few miles distance; but the indomitable courage of the

* It is foreign to the object of this work to trace the history of individuals; but I may be allowed to clear the character of Justinianus from the worst part of the ingratitude shown to the hero, who had refused empire in order to serve such a master. Belisarius though disgraced, and imprisoned in his own house for a few months, suffered no corporal injury, and ere his death saw his innocence acknowledged, and his honours restored.

Goths was not subdued: they retired beyond the Po and elected Teias as their leader. Again they advanced into the heart of Italy, but their forces were insufficient for more than an heroic death: Teias was slain in the first day's combat, but the fight was renewed on the morrow, and it was not till the third day that the poor remnant of this warlike nation condescended to accept a capitulation, by which they were left free to depart with a portion of their property to seek some other land as a home, and from this time the Ostrogoths of Italy sunk into insignificance. Their enmity to letters proved their destruction; for Amalasuntha's wise and just government, had it continued, would have so fused the two nations into one, that no attack from without would have availed against an united people, whose interest it was to support a system under which they were happy and prosperous. They rejected this and perished, not for lack of courage, or of rude virtues, but for lack of those arts of civilisation which their enemies possessed.

The Frank power meantime, notwithstanding internal dissentions, continued to hold its ground. The four sons of Clovis had divided his empire among them, but this division was always varia-

ble; and at the time that Belisarius invaded Italy, Theudebert or Theodebert, grandson of the founder of the Frank empire, held the chief power, and the Romans as well as the Goths endeavoured to secure his assistance. He promised it, entered Italy with an army which attacked and plundered the one and the other without distinction, and then, wasted by a pestilence, the consequence of their reckless plunder of all that should have furnished subsistence, they recrossed the Alps, having merely added to the calamities of the miserable country. We may perhaps trace in this expedition of the Franks, the beginning of the new system of tactics which distinguished the armies of the middle ages. "The king of the Franks," says the chronicler, "was accompanied by but few horsemen—but they alone carried lances. The infantry had neither bows nor spears, but a sword, a shield and a battle axe, exceedingly heavy and sharp on both sides."* "Though called Christians," continues this writer, "they preserve much of their old faith, using human sacrifices and many more unholy rites;" so that on the whole we may conclude that their so-

* Procop. De Bell. Goth. lib. ii. c. 25.

called conversion consisted only in adding a fresh superstition to the rest, not in the abandonment of their former practices.

Theodebert is celebrated by another contemporary writer for his munificence and justice; "his reverence for the priesthood, endowment of churches; almsgiving to the poor, and other pious works:" * but his conduct in other respects was licentious and cruel, and the bad faith of his invasion of Italy admits of no palliation. We can therefore only conclude that, at the time this author wrote, Christianity had lost much if not all of its moral purity, and was become, even in the eyes of the clergy, a system of creeds and ceremonies rather than a principle of action; and that the endowment of religious edifices was already allowed to be pleaded as a set off against the deepest moral offences. This was not the religion which Christ taught, and when the great object of his teaching the purification of the heart was disregarded, of course the progress of corruption was rapid. That a bishop should be found to recount the murders and adulteries of this prince and his uncles, without any expression of displeasure, certainly

† Greg. Episc. Turon. Hist. Francor. lib. iii. c. 25.

proves that crimes of this kind were at that time too common to excite any surprise, and as we have already seen what could be effected among barbarians by a truly christian teacher, we cannot acquit the clergy of neglect of duty if such crimes were common. It appears then that the state of the Franks at that time may be summed up in few words: their kings favoured the catholic clergy, whose influence kept their Roman subjects quiet, while the chiefs and their warriors mixed the ceremonies of Heathenism and Christianity together, without any comprehension of the real doctrines of the religion into which they had been baptized. The lingering superstitions which we still find among the ignorant lower classes throughout Europe, may almost always be traced back to this imperfect reception of Christianity by the later converts to the faith, among whom the old rites continued to be practised from habit, and a certain vague opinion of their efficacy; and thus these were perpetuated, even though the belief in the gods thus honoured or invoked has long since past away; and those who attach value to omens and charms have no better reason to give for their persuasion than that which is usually put forward in support of ignorant prejudice, that "Our fathers believed the same."

The Visigoths perhaps somewhat enervated by the habits of a southern climate, gradually yielded before the hardier and fiercer Franks.* and after giving up most of the towns they held in the southern part of Gaul, established their rule on the other side of the Pyrennees. The Franks grown arrogant by success, and called on by the Ostrogoths of Italy for assistance,

* Agathias, a Greek chronicler of this period, gives a character of much greater civilization to the Franks, but his opinion seems to have been founded on their ready reception of the ceremonies of the Catholic faith. "They do not live dispersed in the country in the fashion of barbarians," says he, "but govern themselves by laws and customs almost the same as those of the Romans. They have the same ceremonies in their contracts and their marriages; they profess the same religion, and hold the orthodox faith. They have, like us, feast days, and priests, and magistrates; in short they appear to me a very polished nation, and the chief difference between them and us is their dress and their language." Agath. l. i. c. 2. The love of peace and justice however for which he gives them credit farther on, is so much at variance with facts that I omit the rest of the passage. What I have given is curious, as showing the influence of the conquered upon the conquerors through the medium of Christianity, which even where it does not bring all the virtues which ought to distinguish it, seldom fails to carry a certain degree of civilisation in its train as long as one breath of its spirit remains. It was reserved for Cortes to show that Christianity might be *inflicted* without civilising.

once more sent a large army over the Alps, chiefly composed of the yet ruder idolatrous Germans, but they had to encounter the tactics of an experienced general in Narses, and few returned to tell the tale of their sufferings and their defeat. The dissentions consequent on a continually varying division of the empire of Clovis and the provinces which his sons had added to it, prevented the Frank monarchs from attempting any thing farther on the side of Italy; but the dominion of this people, towards the middle of the sixth century, extended to nearly the whole of Gaul, in which Savoy, Switzerland, and the six Rhenane provinces were included, and beyond the Rhine all which lay between that river and the Weser, with the addition of Thuringia, Bavaria, the country of the Frisii, and the Saxons, who at least nominally acknowledged the supremacy of the sons of Clovis: but at this time Christianity does not appear to have crossed the Rhine.

The government, notwithstanding the favourable testimony of Agathias, appears from other accounts, to have been still rude, and the historian was probably deceived by the liberty, which the barbarian conquerors had generally granted to the vanquished provinces, of choosing what

law they would live under. At this time "the Frank monarchy was without any thing that could properly be termed finances. The Franks had refused to submit to either the land or capitation tax, which the Romans had been accustomed to pay, and it seems likely that their resistance led to the abolition of these taxes even for the conquered inhabitants.* Some of these when called to the councils of the monarch attempted more than once to restore the ancient Roman system of taxation, but they always became victims to the popular discontent. The Dukes and Counts, however, drew from the provinces certain revenues, the nature or sum of which is not well known: but whatever sums they thus raised seemed to have been nearly all appropriated to their own use; the king's treasury shared but very little of it. This treasury was then a tangible thing; being a strong box of which the king himself kept the key: but from this chest no treasure was drawn for the expenses of the government; for as it was nei-

* The policy of the conquerors appears every where to have been that of conciliating the mass of the people by relieving them from the oppression of the Roman taxes. They seized a portion of the lands, but imposed few or no taxes on the people.

ther charged with the support of the troops nor the purchase of their arms, nor paid its functionaries, it needed not to disburse much, and the clergy alone had an occasional donation from it for the foundation of monasteries and churches. Duties were levied at the town gates, but they were appropriated by the magistrates for the expenses of the municipality. As for the kings themselves, their expenses, and that of the court were defrayed by the crown lands, on the produce of which they lived in the same manner as other rich proprietors. These estates were numerous, and scattered widely over the kingdom; and the monarchs travelled from one palace to another to consume successively the provisions which had accumulated there. The administration of such large estates might have been a very complicated affair, but this arrangement prevented the necessity of account books and correspondence. The produce of the land was received in kind, and used in the same manner, and when the granaries were empty the account was settled . . . At this period all justice emanated not from the king but the people. The people had made the laws, the people modified them, the people supplied the judges who enforced them. The king, it is true, nominated

the dukes and counts or *grafen* who in each city presided over the tribunal or *mallum*, but this assembly, where justice was administered, was composed of all the citizens, and he who neglected to attend it was liable to a punishment by the Salic law * . . . the twelve relations or neighbours who, by tendering their oaths with that of the accused supplied the proof, were simple citizens also . . . There was no connexion between these different courts, and no appeal from one to the other . . . every citizen preserved the right of being judged by the law of his ancestors, and a law of Clothaire, A. D. 560, confirmed this privilege to the Romans † . . . Changes of law were the work of the assemblies in the *Champ de Mars* in the presence of the king with his council of the great men of the kingdom and of the people of all ranks ‡ . . . The inhabitants of the country were distributed into hundreds, and the individuals of each hundred were made responsible for the thefts committed in their district . . . The election of bi-

* Lex salica § 90.

† Chlotarii regis Constitutio generalis § 4. Baluzii Capitularia, T. i. p. 7, et Script. Franc. T. iv. p. 116.

‡ Decret. Childeberti reg. § 1, 2, 3. Bal. Cap. T. i. p. 17. Script. Franc. T. iv. p. 111.

shops was vested in the people and clergy of each diocese." *

Those who have at all studied the ancient laws of the Anglo-Saxons will perceive the family likeness between these laws of the Franks, and those of our ancestors: the habits of the great Teutonic family, when carried into different countries, underwent modifications according to the circumstances of the inhabitants, but every where they left the trace of popular rights and independence, which cost the monarchs of Europe no small pains to erase, and of which the tradition was never lost. In the East the old patriarchal form of government appears to have been retained; the prince had the authority and rights of a father over the clans which obeyed him: but the wandering tribes which migrated towards Europe were colonists, not clans: they chose a chief to lead them, but his functions were those of a general merely; the elders of the horde regulated their few civil affairs by the ancient customs of the tribe, and thus the functions of leader and judge became separated.

It is hardly possible to give the present mass

* Sismondi Hist. des Français, Tom. i. p. 294.

of general readers any clear notion of the state of barbarian tribes; and it is only those who have had dealings with the nomade tribes still subsisting in the north of Asia, or the Arabs of the desert, who will comprehend the mixture of patient endurance, ferocity, faithlessness in some things, and honourable feeling in others which usually characterises barbarous and semi-barbarous nations. The Visigoths were the first to emerge from this state, and did so the most completely: they had received Christianity when it was less incumbered with the inventions of men, and those who professed it showed their sincerity by a purer life, and an endeavour, at least, to assimilate themselves to the master they served, which extended even to their princes: but as time went on, the ecclesiastical functionaries, weary probably, of the effort to cultivate any thing like spiritual knowledge in minds so hebetised: finding every where the same opposition on the part of the old warriors to the instruction of the young, which caused the ruin of Amalasuntha: perhaps taking warning by her fate, and having lost the passion for martyrdom when it was to be endured in a more ignoble manner; gave up the difficult labour, finding it both less dangerous and far easier to

win riches and rank from superstitious fear. Thus each tribe as it received Christianity, received it in a more deteriorated form, until, as in the case of the Franks, it was a ceremonial worship and nothing else: sacrilege was reproved, but vice and cruelty were not: and although the prescribed rites were for the most part observed, we have only to read the works of contemporary writers to see that both clergy and people had almost lost sight of the real objects of the gospel. A man who was merely decent in his life was at once celebrated as a saint, and from receiving a homage which human nature is not strong enough to bear, began to wish "to be seen of men" rather than in his inward heart to dwell upon the approbation of Him "who seeth in secret." Then came those mortifications of the flesh which won the admiration of the vulgar, and gave the reputed saint so wide an influence. He was expected to work miracles, perhaps he himself began to believe it: if he failed he might lay the blame on his own or the patient's want of faith; but as this was a disgrace, how much must friends and admirers have been tempted, even for the glory of God, to conceal any failure of so distinguished a servant! If the austerities of an ascetic life had at

last produced insanity, the claim to supernatural power was made without scruple, and wild tales were recounted of wonders performed which had no ground but the delusions of a heated imagination. We may wonder now at the irrationality of those who believed that the Lord of the Universe would suspend its laws on occasions so trivial; but when a man had gained the reputation of sanctity among the mass of the people, no objection could gain a hearing, and the tale went on uncontradicted. Hence the legends of the saints.

Italy had been recovered from the Goths, and was held by the lieutenants of the emperor, but Belisarius alone knew how to preserve soldiers in their duty. The imperial forces abandoned themselves to amusements and debauchery:* their commander Narses accumulated a large fortune in a country exhausted by war, and was become unpopular in consequence of his exactions: he was removed when the complaints of the people reached the emperor, but he had military talents which his successor did not possess, and some have said that the superseded general betrayed his master, and invited a fresh

* Agath. lib. ii. c. 6.

invasion of the barbarians in order to make his own worth more apparent. Be that as it may, the Lombards aided by the Avars, a wild tribe from the North of Asia, having first vanquished the Gepidæ, and associated with them numbers of other hardy adventurers from Germany, Noricum, Sarmatia, &c. crossed the Alps and invaded Italy. The mixed host was led by Alboin king of the Lombards, and spread over the plains which still bear their name, without encountering any where the opposition of a Roman army. The strong places were reduced successively, and the Byzantine court, when deputies from Rome represented the state of the country, could devise no better scheme than that of purchasing the aid of the king of the Franks, but even this was ineffectual; for the ally thus bought was defeated, and the Lombards retained their conquests. The representative of the emperor, with the title of Exarch of Ravenna, still preserved a portion of Italy, but it never again fell under the sway of one sovereign.

So many sieges and captures had well nigh ruined both the city and inhabitants of Rome; and in their misery which the emperor was often unwilling or unable to relieve, the inhabitants looked to their bishop as their only friend: his

sacred character often gained him an attention from the barbarians which would not have been accorded to one bearing arms; he was generally possessed of whatever learning the times afforded, and it was seldom that he was backward in using the revenues of his church in relieving the wants of the citizens. Thus he possessed at that time many of the most legitimate claims to sovereignty, and when Justinianus in his code named the bishop of Rome *the head of the churches of God*, the title was not contested. The ancient grandeur of the Roman name still hovered about the city: and the inhabitants of an empire which had been one under the glorious sway of Theodosius, still loved the shadow of unity which they found in the general submission to the decrees of its spiritual head. The vanquished Romans found their vanity gratified by the homage which the various nations which had subdued them paid to a Roman bishop, and felt that they were not wholly subdued while Franks and Goths acknowledged his supremacy and bowed their pride to his laws.

While a Gothic king gave laws to Rome from a near seat of government, or an imperial general like Belisarius bore sway there; the bishop of Rome was but the spiritual chief of the peo-

ple, and did not interfere in civil affairs; but when, in the last desperate struggle with the Goths, the remaining patrician families had nearly disappeared: when the consulate existed no longer, and thus there was neither senate nor magistrate whom the people could depend on, the general feeling turned towards the clergy as the only persons likely to take an interest in the well-being of the miserable city, equally plundered and ruined by its enemies and its defenders; and promotion in the church was the only dignity left which the remnant of its nobility could aspire to. The envoy of Rome at the court of Constantinople was Gregorius, a deacon whose grandfather Felix, had been bishop of Rome. His family was senatorian both on the father's and mother's side, and he himself was wealthy; but he devoted his patrimony to the foundation of religious houses, and he himself professed his intention to renounce the world; but he had not long remained in the retirement of a monastery when the voice of the people called him to the episcopal chair, and he was raised to the dignity of Bishop of Rome by the unanimous voice of the clergy and the people of all ranks. He made a show of resistance to their wishes, whether sincere or not, is diffi-

cult to determine, but at any rate it was ineffectual. He was enthroned bishop, A. D. 590, and held that dignity for above thirteen years with so much credit, that posterity has justly assigned him the title of Great. It is remarkable that he condemned the assumption of the title of universal bishop by the patriarch of Constantinople, as antichristian, and he himself made no pretension to supremacy over any but the western churches. A very little later this "antichristian" title was claimed by and accorded to one of his successors.

It has already been mentioned that Gregorius I. was himself wealthy; besides this the revenues of the see were large, derived from estates in various parts of Italy, which were carefully and mercifully administered by his agents;* and the produce when transported to Rome was diligently applied to the relief of want, of the sick, and of strangers; and such were the calamities to which his charity had to minister, that it is astonishing how, even with

* We have the best proof of this in the business letters addressed to his agents, which are still extant, and which are filled with directions for the relief of different indigent persons, as well as for the just administration of his estates.

his large revenues, he was able to alleviate so much misery. "The misfortunes of Rome involved the apostolical pastor in the business of peace and war . . . Gregory awakened the emperor from a long slumber, exposed the guilt or incapacity of the exarch and his inferior ministers, complained that the veterans were withdrawn from Rome . . . encouraged the Italians to guard their cities and altars; and condescended in the crisis of danger to name the tribunes, and direct the operations of the provincial troops. But . . . as a christian bishop he preferred the salutary offices of peace . . . and he presumed to save his country without the consent of the emperor or the exarch. The sword of the enemy was suspended over Rome; it was averted by the mild eloquence and seasonable gifts of the pontiff, who commanded the respect of heretics and barbarians. The merits of Gregory were treated by the Byzantine court with reproach and insult, but in the attachment of a grateful people he found the purest reward of a citizen and the best right of a sovereign." * Not that this great man was

* Gibbon Dec. and Fall, chap. 45. I have chosen here to quote the words of an author not wont to exalt the ecclesiastical character, omitting only a sneer which

wholly without the faults of his time; he was credulous in many things; imbued with not a few of the prejudices of an age when Christianity was little understood, and little practised; but he had a mind large enough when the occasion came, to take a truer view of his duties than those prejudices would have allowed. Instead of having recourse to fictitious miracles, he took the ordinary means which God had placed in his hands, and accomplished a great purpose with the prudence of a man of the world and the

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spoils an eloquent passage, and does no credit to the author himself. One stain on the character of Gregorius nevertheless must not be slurred over. He had met with no favour at the Byzantine court, and the distress of Rome had found little either of attention or compassion from the emperor Mauritius. He might, as a man of the world, hope for more from the Usurper Phocas, who would probably seek to conciliate friends: but as a christian bishop he ought to have known that a man who begins his career with murder will not be guiltless in other things; and the flattery with which he greeted the accession of a monster of cruelty and vice disgraces his memory. "Lætentur cœli et exultet terra, et de vestris benignis actibus universæ reipublicæ populus nunc usque vehementer afflictus hilarescat"—is not the language to be held to a man whose hands were still red with the blood of the emperor and his innocent sons, whatever were the hopes he might form from his accession.

disinterestedness of a true Christian. Let us not detract from such a character, but acknowledge freely that the temporal power which he first gained for the pontificate, however evil its consequences may have been, however it may have embroiled Europe, and brought discredit on Christianity itself, was founded on what must be the foundation of all power, the love and gratitude of the people whom he comforted and supported: and while condemning those corruptions of the pure and rational precepts of Christ and his Apostles, which occasionally involved even such a man as this great pontiff in their ill consequences, let us not forget how much of their true doctrine guided his actions. Had the care of Rome been confided to a civil governor worthy of the office, Gregorius would neither have claimed nor won the power which the weakness of the Byzantine administration forced him to assume: but the rank he took was at that moment a part of his duty to the people whom he saved: at a later period, the fame and the greatness he achieved had more charms for his successors than the self-denial and active performance of his duties which distinguished the career of this illustrious man.

A large part of Britain was now in the pos-

session of various northern invaders among whom the Saxons and Angles were the chief: the native Britons retreated before them, and took refuge, when defeated, in the mountainous regions where they could better defend themselves against the attacks of their enemies. In this warfare the Britons appear to have been at times successful, for Anglican captives were exposed for sale in the slave market at Rome, unless indeed we may suppose these to have been kidnapped and carried off by the northern pirates who were already beginning their ravages. It is not needful to repeat that the attention of Gregorius was first drawn to the state of Britain by the sight of the youths thus offered for sale: the tale is well known: but no sooner had he leisure to attend to any thing besides the state of Rome itself, than he selected a detachment of monks to whom he entrusted the task of converting the heathen Anglo-Saxons to the faith of Christ. The party began their journey as he commanded, but were soon seized with such a panic that they sent back their leader Augustine to beg for permission to return. The pontiff in reply encouraged them to persevere, and they accordingly pursued their journey and landed in the Isle of Thanet. They

took with them from France interpreters capable of speaking the Saxon language, whom they sent to king Ethelbert to explain their business. The time was well chosen, as Gregorius probably knew, for Ethelbert had married a christian wife, a Frank princess, who was likely to use her influence with her husband to further the business. The missionaries were ordered to stay where they were till the king had considered the matter; but in the course of a few days he came to them; gave them a friendly reception,* allowed them to reside at Canterbury and to preach and convert whom they could: soon after he himself embraced the faith, though he refused to compel any to follow his example: an

* "He had before heard of the christian religion," says Bede, "having a christian wife of the royal family of the Franks, called Bertha; whom he had received from her parents on condition that she should be permitted to practise her religion with the bishop Luidhard, who was sent with her to preserve her faith. Some days after the king came into the island (of Thanet), and sitting in the open air ordered Augustine and his companions to be brought into his presence. For he had taken precaution that they should not come to him in any house lest, according to an ancient superstition, if they practised any magical arts they might impose on, and so get the better of him." Bedæ Hist. Ecc. l. i. c. 25.

instance of good sense not common in the annals of royal converts. Augustine after a time repaired to Arles to receive consecration as bishop of the Anglo-Saxons, and sent two of his companions to Rome to acquaint the pontiff with his success and to ask his reply to several queries which he considered of importance.*

It has already been seen that Christianity, though new among the Anglo-Saxons, was not new in Britain; and after the work of conversion had been satisfactorily carried on among the heathen princes and their subjects, Augustine turned his attention to the ancient church of the land. He requested a conference with the British bishops and doctors of the next pro-

* Bed. Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 27. The extreme grossness of language and thought which characterizes these communications is hardly to be reconciled, even in the most barbarous times, with the purity enjoined by the Gospel, or the example of Him whom the early christian writers refer to as a pattern of refinement and elegance of manners. Truly at this time the salt had lost its savour, and the clergy instead of teaching that mental chastity which avoids even the thought of impurity, seem to have delighted in a sort of casuistry which instead of sanctifying, could only defile the mind which was willing to dwell on such subjects. "If the light that is within you be dark, how great is that darkness."

vince, which by the intervention of Ethelbert was brought about: and the missionary represented to them the various points in which they departed from what he called the Catholic Unity: i. e. the practice of the church of Rome in the keeping of Easter and other matters of that kind. The difference of opinion as to the day on which Easter should be kept was an old grievance, and it was only by the powerful intervention of Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, that Victor, the then bishop of Rome, had been prevented from causing a schism in the church on this insignificant point, as the martyr considered it. Victor yielded to reason; many churches retained their own custom, yet all met in friendly communion notwithstanding ceremonial differences,* till a later period, when the emperors, incited by their ecclesiastical counsellors insisted on conformity. Britain had been all but independent for some centuries; its church therefore governed itself; but we know little of its proceedings till the period of the Pelagian controversy, and even then, amid the virulence of party we probably gain but little truth. We are not told all the points on which the Britons

* Euseb. Hist. Ecc. lib. v. c. 26.

and the missionary of Rome were at variance, but "after a long disputation . . . they remained firm in their own opinions, preferring them," says the historian, "before those of all the churches in the world"—upon which Augustine put an end to the conference by an appeal to the miraculous power which God would grant to his true servants. The Britons with the humility of rational Christians expected no interposition from on high, and were unwilling to put the question to such an issue: but Augustine insisting, a blind man was brought, who at the prayer of the missionary received his sight. The bishops, strangely sceptical if indeed so stupendous a miracle had been wrought before their eyes, said "they could not depart from their ancient customs without the consent and leave of their people:" they therefore desired that a second synod might be appointed, at which more of their number would be present. This being decreed, there came, as is asserted, seven bishops of the Britons, and many most learned men, particularly from their most noble monastery, which in the English tongue is called Barncornaburg (Bangor?). They that were to go to the aforesaid council repaired first to a certain holy and discreet man, who was wont to

lead an eremetical life among them, advising with him whether they ought at the preaching of Augustine to forsake their traditions. He answered, 'If he be a man of God follow him'—'How shall we know that?' said they. He replied, 'Our Lord saith, Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: if therefore Augustine be meek and lowly of heart, it is to be believed that he has taken upon him the yoke of Christ, and offers the same to you to take upon you. But if he be stern and haughty, it appears that he is not of God, nor are we to regard his words.' They insisted again, 'And how shall we discern even this?' 'Do you contrive,' said the Anchorite, 'that he may first arrive with his party at the place where the synod is to be held; and if at your approach he shall rise up to you, hear him submissively, being assured that he is the servant of Christ; but if he shall despise you, and not rise up to you, whereas you are more in number, let him also be despised by you.'" *

The bishops thought this good counsel, and Augustine having kept his seat, at their arrival they charged him with pride, and refused to

* Bed. Hist. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 2.

listen to him or receive him as their archbishop: and he, provoked by their want of compliance, threatened them that as they would not join in unity with their brethren they should be warred upon by their enemies; and if they would not preach the way of life to the English nation they should at their hands undergo the vengeance of death." The prophecy was not difficult of fulfilment, as the Saxons were every year wresting fresh territory from the Britons, and a few years after, the monastery of Bangor was taken and sacked, with great slaughter of the monks, by Ethelfrith the king of Bernicia: the noble library was destroyed, and we hear little after this, of the independent church of the Britons.

While the barbarian invaders of the Western Empire were gradually submitting to the spiritual supremacy of the latin ecclesiastics, a victory obtained by art where force was unavailing, the East was a scene of political profligacy, religious dissention, and persecution. Justinianus found in the Theodosian code many harsh enactments with regard to heretics and pagans: these were transferred to the new code with additional rigour, and executed with less scruple than heretofore. Baptism and conformity were

enforced under heavy penalties; the Samaritans provoked at the interference with their worship rushed into rebellion, but were subdued by the forces of the empire, and between the ravages of the desperate rebels and the vengeance of the victors, the province was entirely ruined.

Justin, the weak nephew and successor of Justinianus, was frightened into abdication by the successes of the Persians, and a man worthy of empire was called to the throne. Under the wise rule of Tiberius II. and of Mauritius, whom he chose for his successor as the most worthy, Persia was humbled, and the Eastern Empire was for a time arrested in its fall, but the attempt to introduce reforms had the usual consequence when a licentious army was to be disciplined. Mauritius was driven from his throne, and ultimately murdered; and Phocas, a centurion of the mutinous soldiery, was saluted emperor. Persia had yielded to the arms of Mauritius; but when Phocas despatched a messenger to Chosroes announcing the death of that emperor and his own accession, the Persian saw that the opportunity was favourable: he felt or affected to feel horror at the crime, and armed his nation to chastise it. Very soon almost all the strong places on the frontier were lost: other

and yet wilder tribes threatened the provinces of the empire, or had already possessed themselves of them, and the people had to suffer at once from the cruelties of foreign invasion, and those of the tyrant whom the army had imposed upon them. The same symptoms which had preceded the fall of the Western Empire were not less apparent in the East: the only question remaining was, how long the death struggle might last.

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